Some Lakas men push for Roco if there's an election

Story Below, Col. 3

Banker punches banker

TWO prominent bankers ended a friendship of 30 years on Sunday night. Octavio Espiritu, 59, a director of the Bank of the Philippine Islands, reportedly punched Philippine National Bank board member Vicente Panlilio, 56, in the eye at Punta Fuego, Batangas, the INQUIRER learned last night. Espiritu was allegedly fuming after being told by a retired banker that Panlilio had been badmouthing him over the merger of BPI and Far East Bank three years ago. Panlilio was the bank's SVP/COO when Espiritu was its CEO. *Christian V. Esguerra*

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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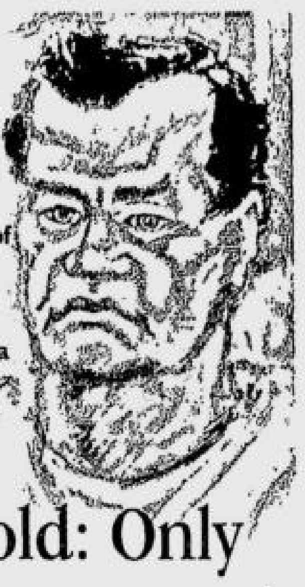
Friday, January 3, 2003 ★★ 40 pages / 4 sections / vol. 18 / no. 26 P15



PORTRAIT of Rep. Mark Jimenez as convict sketched by a Miami court artist.

HERNANDO PEREZ: "...Dark forces conspired with criminals against me..."

PDI PHOTO

Perez quits; MJ claims victory

By Dona Pazzibugan and Michael Lim Ubac

HERNANDO Perez's leave of absence from his job as justice secretary is now permanent.

Perez, unable to shake off Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez allegation that he extorted $2 million from him, resigned last night, eating his words that he would return to his post.

The resignation gave credence to the claim of Jimenez, who has been extradited to the United States to face charges of fraud and illegal campaign contributions, that President Macapagal-Arroyo had assured him that Perez would not be reinstated in the Cabinet.

Ms Macapagal immediately accepted Perez's resignation, which took effect immediately. She did not name a replacement as of press time.

Perez personally handed his resignation letter to the President during a brief call at the Palace at around 5:30 p.m., according to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"The President today accepted the resignation of Justice Secretary Hernando Perez. (She) thanked Perez for his role in prosecuting several high profile criminal cases and in enforcing the rule of law during his tenure as secretary of justice," Bunye said in a statement.

A lawyer of Jimenez said the resignation was a victory for the congressman. It is a "victory for him and his family, and for the Filipino people who deserve untainted governance," lawyer Ed Escueta said. "A battle had been won, but the war is far from over," he said in a statement.

PEREZ/ A16

MJ told: Only 'clean money' accepted here

By Michael Lim Ubac and Juliet Labog-Javellana

IT seems the man who stunned the nation with his wanton display of wealth is having a hard time putting up the $500,000 bail bond for his temporary liberty in the United States.

Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas N.

JAILED/ A16

Edong, Danding, Joma asked to join 'unity gov't'

Approved by GMA; formed in 45 days

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

BESIDES not running in 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo has approved the formation of a "unity government" that includes all opposition parties as well as communist and Moro rebel groups in the country, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. said yesterday.

De Venecia said the unity government would be formed in 45 days.

He said the President "has approved" the creation of a unity government because "she's interested in healing the country and moving it forward."

Asked if the President had any reservations about the composition of the unity government, he said: "She just wants an effective, all-embracing successful government because she will be its leader."

The Speaker said that he had obtained a commitment from ousted President Joseph Estrada for a "national reconciliation," and that in the next few days he would seek the consensus of political parties and religious, civil society and business leaders for a "no-politics, no-nonsense government of national unity."

De Venecia said he had asked the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino of Sen. Edgardo Angara, the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, the communist-

EDONG/ A15

"LET us all be heroes," was the theme of the homily at the Mass for national unity attended by President Macapagal and former President Cory Aquino, the President's children Luli and Dato, and government officials including opposition Sen. Vicente Sotto III. VAL HANDUMON

GMA admired, applauded at Mass for unity

AT AN UNSCHEDULED Mass for "national unity," held at the Edsa Shrine, President Macapagal-Arroyo got her first taste of the public's appreciation of her announcement on Dec. 30 that she was out of the 2004 presidential race.

A crowd of about a thousand burst into thunderous applause when the President arrived five minutes before the 7 p.m. Mass. Just as her entrance was so admiringly applauded so was her departure.

The Mass seemed to be the grateful response of the Catholic Church to the President's "fine example of pursuing peace and unity for the world and the nation," as Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas put it during his homily entitled "Let Us be Heroes Together."

He called on the Filipino people to make personal sacrifices like Ms Macapagal.

Church officials also called for an end to destructive politics that had virtually made it impossible for the President to succeed.

"Our beloved President has shown us a fine example of pursuing peace and unity for the world and the nation," Villegas said.

Among those present was the Edsa Shrine fixture, former President Corazon Aquino, who herself acknowledged the "big sacrifice" of the President to bring peace and unity to the country.

No matter the doubts raised on Ms Macapagal's intentions in renouncing the presidential race, Aquino is a true believer.

"What does she have to gain by making announcements if she does not really mean it? So, I believe she is sincere about being a good President," Aquino said.

Underscoring the unity theme was the presence of opposition Sen. Vicente Sotto III, who was seated in the front pew with the President and her children Luli and Dato, and

GMA/ A17

'Silent Reform' man blasts PCSO head

By Norman Bordadora

THE PROPONENT of the Silent Reform movement will not be silenced.

Jose Luis "Linggoy" Alcuaz, true to his gadfly reputation, yesterday struck out at the Macapagal administration, training his guns on Ma. Livia "Honeygirl" Singson-de Leon, chair of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office which he serves as board director.

In a news conference at his New Manila home yesterday, Alcuaz accused De Leon of graft for allegedly favoring certain suppliers and distributors for the latest PCSO project—the Cash, Car and Read—which is to replace the old Sweepstakes lottery.

SILENT A16

Can Ramos run again? Debate rages

By Rocky Nazareno and Donna S. Cueto

HE CAN. He cannot.

This was going back and forth yesterday in legal circles following reports that former President Fidel V. Ramos may be tapped by the ruling Lakas party for the presidential election in 2004.

Former Solicitor General Francisco Chavez said Ramos was barred, just like any other past

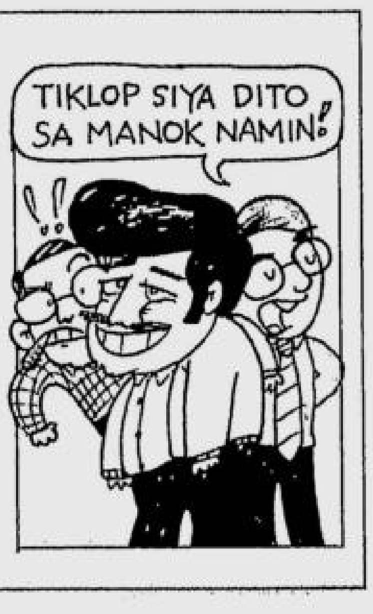
CAN RAMOS/ A16

'If FVR runs so will Erap'

By Christine O. Avendaño, Volt Contreras and Agnes Donato

SHOULD the ruling Lakas-NUCD party field former President Fidel Ramos in the 2004 presidential election, the opposition might "seriously consider" making deposed President Joseph Estrada its standard-bearer, Cavite Rep. Gilbert

IF FVR/ A17



TIKLOP SIYA DITO SA MANOK NAMIN!

Some Lakas men push for Roco but . . .

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

A GROUP of Lakas legislators is pushing for Raul Roco to be the administration party's standard-bearer in 2004. But there's a catch and that is if elections push through.

Instead of talking about the standard bearer, Lakas should focus on Charter change, according to Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri.

He said the President's decision not to run in 2004 had placed Charter change proponents on a "high moral ground." He said the opposition would no longer have an excuse to oppose Charter change because it would not benefit the President.

"Now is the proper time for Charter change," Zubiri said. He said it is the priority of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., who co-chairs the party with the President.

But Zubiri and Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles cited Roco's topping recent surveys of possible presidential candidates.

Besides, Roco is the "most acceptable" to the Liberal Party, according to its president, Batanes Rep. Florencio Abad.

Camarines Sur Rep. Sulpicio "Cho" Roco said his brother was open to being the presidential candidate of the People Power Coalition (PPC) or Lakas. PPC is the broad coalition which helped bring down Joseph Estrada in January 2001 and installed then Vice President Macapagal to power.

Zubiri, a member of the so-called "Spice Boys" who were key players in the impeachment of Estrada, said he and "90 percent" of Lakas preferred to push for Charter change that seeks to bring about a change in the form of government.

But if the 2004 elections would push through, Zubiri said he would support the "adoption" of Roco as Lakas standard bearer.

Zubiri said a group of Lakas congressmen was in fact "actively pushing" for Roco's selection as the party's presidential candidate.

He said Roco's brother in the House of Representatives was also talking to their colleagues about Roco's election plans.

Zubiri said he would formally propose Roco's adoption as the party candidate at the Lakas

SOME/ A16

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/03/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONTPAGE

ERC rules Meralco can collect PPA

THE GOVERNMENT said Thursday it has allowed the Manila Electric Co. to collect up to P7.3 billion from customers in deferred purchased power adjustment (PPA) charges.

The government's Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) released documents dated Dec. 19, 2002 that effectively scrapped an earlier April order that had restrained Meralco from collecting the PPA, a mechanism to pass on distribution costs.

Meralco, which has a customer base of 3.8 million in Metro Manila and nearby provinces, had claimed it was owed P9.2 billion in deferred PPA charges.

The ERC had ordered Meralco in April to stop collecting the PPA charges after questions arose over Meralco's records.

The regulator said Meralco could collect the deferred PPA charges when the commission approved a separate application to change the way power is billed. *Reuters*

Military tags MILF in blast

By Martin P. Marfil

THE MILITARY yesterday blamed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front for the New Year's Eve bombing in Tacurong City which killed eight and wounded 32 people.

Military officials also accused the rebels of raiding a remote village in Zamboanga Sibugay province and setting ablaze several houses, apparently to avenge the killing of one of their comrades.

There were no immediate reports of casualties in the attack late Wednesday outside Tungawan town.

In a press statement, Lt. Col. Fredesvindo Covarrubias of the Zamboanga City-based 4th Civil Relations Group said that the MILF had been violating the peace agreement that it signed with the government two years ago.

He said the MILF has denied involvement in the Dec. 31 bomb blast even though evidence at the site pointed to them.

Covarrubias said the MILF often blamed renegade MILF fighters, or "lost commands," who are outside the control of its leadership for attacks in the south.

He accused the MILF of having been engaged in numerous "atrocities" even before its Yuletide offensive.

The Tacurong bombing was the sixth in Central Mindanao since Dec. 23.

Violations

He cited such supposed violations as the attack on the military detachment in Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao, in January 2001, another attack on a government convoy in the same municipality and the burning of several houses in that province.

He said an MILF informant had identified an MILF leader as a "bomber" who took part in several attacks.

The local government of Tacurong City in Sultan Kudarat province has offered a P100,000 bounty for the capture, dead or alive, of those responsible for the Dec. 31 blast.

One of the injured died on Thursday, raising the death toll to nine.

"We want the early resolution of the bombing incident to give justice to the innocent victims," said Tacurong Mayor Lino Montilla.

He said the money for the reward would come from local funds and that any civilian who can provide information leading to the capture of the suspect was eligible for the reward.

Montilla announced that the city government would be footing the medical bills of blast victims.

Task force

Col. Agustin Dema-ala, commander of the Army's 301st Infantry Brigade based in Tacurong, said that a task force had been created to investigate the bombing.

Police yesterday engaged the services of a cartographer from the South Cotabato Police Command to sketch an image of the suspect based on the description of witnesses.

One of the witnesses was a store owner who actually saw the man pulling out a grenade and tossing it into a crowd.

About a hundred people were milling around the "firecracker zone" near the city plaza to buy firecrackers as the New Year revelry was starting when the grenade exploded at 7:20 p.m. on Dec. 31. *Aquiles Z Zonio and Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau, and AFP*

Ranking Abu nabbed in Zamboanga

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A senior member of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group was captured near this port city yesterday, a military spokesperson said.

Merang Abante, who carries a P1-million bounty on his head, was captured by members of the Army's intelligence and a special police task force, said Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, spokesperson for the Southern Command.

Abante was being interrogated, Lucero said, giving no other details.

His precise rank in the Abu Sayyaf was not immediately known.

"Our intelligence is trying to establish what his mission was and to determine his participation in the bombings in October and in the kidnappings in Basilan and Jolo," said Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya.

The Abu Sayyaf seized three Americans and 17 Filipinos from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan in May 2001 at the start of a kidnapping spree that victimized more than 100 people.

One of the Americans, Guillermo Sobero, was killed by the rebels and another, Martin Burnham, died during a rescue operation. Burnham's wife was wounded but was rescued by soldiers.

The group is holding four members of the Christian sect Jehovah's Witnesses and three Indonesian tugboat crewmembers kidnapped last year. It has also been blamed for a series of bombings in Zamboanga late last year that killed 12 people, including a US Green Beret, and injured more than 200 others.

A six-month joint US-Philippine counterterrorism exercise' last year has been credited with breaking up the al-Qaida-linked group and tracking down its key leaders.

The US has included the group on its list of foreign terrorists and has indicted 10 of its top leaders and members.

Abante is not among them.

Also charged previously were several top members of the Abu Sayyaf, including its spiritual leader, Khadafi Abubakar Janjalani, and the second-in-command, Isnilon Totoni Hapilon.

A $5 million reward has been offered by the United States for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the five leaders charged. *AFP and Reuters*

Cops ordered to visit shooting victims

IF you have been hit by a stray bullet, don't be surprised if you get a call from a cop.

Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., chief of the Philippine National Police, yesterday directed regional and provincial police directors to visit victims of indiscriminate firing in their homes or in hospitals.

Ebdane also instructed the officials to extend assistance to the victims and expedite the investigation of their cases.

"We have to make them feel that we are concerned about them. It's unfortunate that despite our appeals and instruction, some people still fired their guns indiscriminately," said Ricardo de Leon, director for police community relations.

Authorities reported that 17 people were injured by stray bullets this year, down from 29 the previous year. In Bulacan, a 5-year-old girl died after she was hit by a stray bullet. One person was killed last year.

As of noon yesterday, no other policeman was caught for indiscriminate firing. The PNP announced that it had arrested seven police personnel for illegal discharge of firearms between Dec. 26 and 31.

Reports meanwhile said that explosions, firecracker blasts and stray bullets killed at least 12 people and injured another 423 on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. *TJ Burgonio and AFP*

Campos kin, Ong seek new probers

IT seems that confidence in the ability of the Parañaque City police to crack the John Campos murder case is waning.

Campos' family and the camp of his ex-lover, Mary "Rosebud" Ong, want either the National Bureau of Investigation or the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group to take over the probe into the ex-narcotics agent's killing in the early morning of Dec. 5.

Supt. Wency Pascual, officer in charge of the Parañaque City police, said yesterday no member of the Campos family has ever talked to them about the ambush.

"Nobody is following up on the case," Pascual told the INQUIRER. "It seems the family wants either the NBI or the CIDG to take over. I believe the family is in Cebu but nobody had ever bothered to talk to us."

Even Ong, who had publicly accused Sen. Panfilo Lacson of masterminding the killing, refused to cooperate with Parañaque police investigators after Metro Manila police chief Reynaldo Velasco allegedly showed his bias for Lacson. *Christian V. Esguerra*

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Aborted British scouts' visit dismays officials

By TJ Burgonio

CONTRARY to their motto, some 800 British Boy Scouts are "not prepared"—to visit the "unsafe" Philippines that is.

The Philippine National Police said it felt bad that the British scouts cancelled their scheduled trip to the Philippines from Thailand next week due to security fears.

"We were quite saddened (by their decision) because we had already made preparations," said Director Ricardo de Leon, PNP director for police community relations.

The PNP had mapped out an elaborate security plan for the visit and had arranged a "homestead program" in which the visiting scouts would lodge with Filipino "adoptive parents" during their stay here, he said. *(See related story on page A21)*

It was De Leon who had happily announced last month that the British Boy Scouts were coming to Manila after the 20th annual Boy Scout jamboree in Thailand which would bring together some 20,000 youngsters from over 80 countries under the theme, "Share our world, share our cultures."

The scouts, aged 14 to 18, were scheduled to arrive in Manila on Jan. 7 for a two-day visit and interaction with local scouts.

De Leon said the Boy Scouts of the Philippines informed him of the cancellation, but did not cite any reason for it. He said he had not spoken to any BSP official about the development because the latter were still on holiday.

But Sen. Manuel Villar assured the British Boy Scouts yesterday the Philippines was safe despite an assessment that the country was unsafe for foreigners.

Villar, chair of the Senate foreign relations committee, said the scouts might have been fed the wrong or inaccurate information on the peace and order situation in the country.

"The British scouts' decision to cancel their trip was another blow to the country's flagging image in the international community," he said. *With Cynthia D. Balana*

Australia reopens embassy

FOLLOWING the example of Canada and the European Union, Australia yesterday reopened its Manila embassy under tightened security, seven weeks after this was closed because of alleged terror threats.

Australian Ambassador Ruth Pearce called on Foreign Secretary Blas Ople to announce the resumption of full operations at the embassy, the foreign affairs department said in a statement.

The Canadian ambassador, Robert Colette, and Johannes Kok of the European Commission, the local representative office of the European Union, also joined the meeting, it added.

Canada and the EU, which both shut down their representative offices like Australia on Nov. 28, reopened their missions earlier this week.

"This is a vindication of the Philippine government's position that the country is safe for foreign nationals despite its taking a leading role in the global fight against international terrorism," Ople said in a statement. *AFP and AP*

Cimatu heads back to ME as war looms

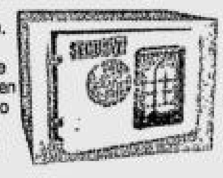
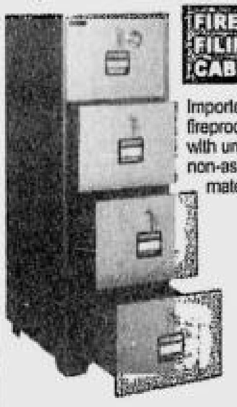
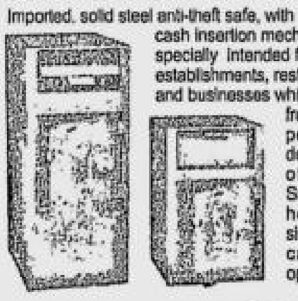
A 13-MAN mission will leave Monday for the Middle East to assess the situation of the Filipino workers there after it appeared a United States war against Iraq was inevitable.

Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson said the team, headed by special envoy to the Middle East Gen. Roy Cimatu (ret.), will check on the current state of Filipino workers in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The team is expected to finish its assessment by Jan. 21.

Imson said communications to Iraq were "deteriorating and becoming limited" because of the tension created by the threat of war with the US.

Imson said the government is preparing to relocate 102 Filipinos from Iraq and some 6,000 OFWs from the border of Kuwait.

Those in Iraq would be moved to Amman, Jordan while those on the border of Kuwait would be moved into the inner cities, he said. *Blanche S. Rivera*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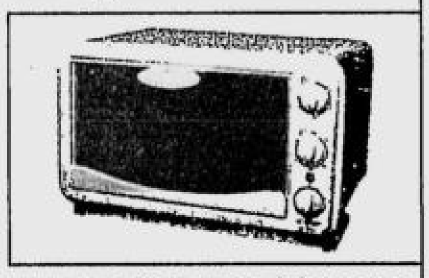

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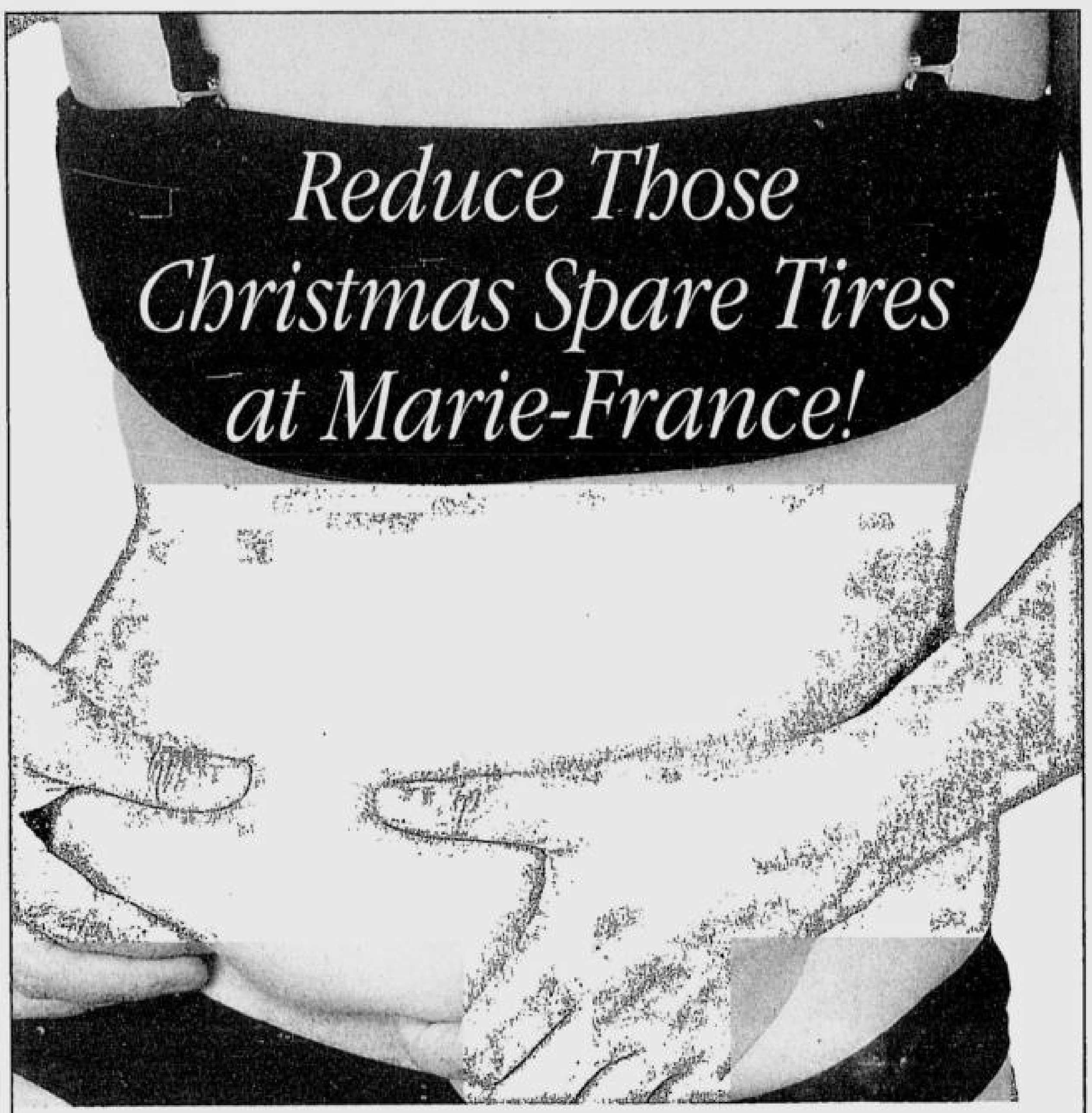
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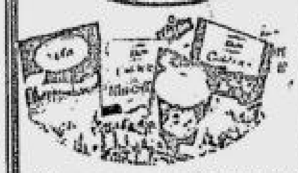

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Talks between PLDT union, management deadlocked

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE TALKS between the management and striking employees of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. were deadlocked yesterday after a meeting before government conciliators failed to bring about a resolution.

The PLDT management has steadfastly refused to take back all the 546 telephone operators it had retrenched.

Labor Undersecretary Josephus Jimenez said PLDT management insisted it could not absorb 337 of the 546 retrenched workers because the vacancies had been filled.

The 160 posts that had been offered to the retrenched workers have already been filled, according to management.

The PLDT management and union appeared yesterday at the Department of Labor and Employment for a second round of talks after the union went on strike Dec. 23.

"There was no agreement, no more setting of meetings. It appears there are no more opportunities for redeployment," said Jimenez yesterday.

The special team created by the DOLE to handle the PLDT case was scheduled to meet late afternoon yesterday to examine its options and "find a lasting and just settlement" to the PLDT dispute.

Jimenez said the team would also look into the union's allegation that PLDT was hiring contractual workers to serve as operators after letting go of its permanent employees.

He said he would ask the union to submit evidence on the hiring of contractuals who, the union said, were working in the PLDT subsidiary offices in Metro Manila and Olongapo City.

PLDT management has refused to release a list of the contractual employees, Jimenez said.

"We will see if there really was a basis for redundancy. We will also have to consider the issue of contractuals because it will have a bearing on the number of positions available," Jimenez said.

The DOLE team is set to announce its decision in the PLDT case today. *With Abigail L. Ho*

Baguio chill kills 2

By Gobleth Moulic
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The yearend chilly weather is a blessing to this mountain resort city's tourism industry but can unfortunately be fatal to some of its older citizens.

The mercury dropped to 11.4 degrees Celsius on New Year's Day, the coldest recorded temperature in the past 10 months, according to forecaster Efren Aquino of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration station here.

The next day, Baguio's health officer Dr. Florence Reyes was signing the death certificates of two people, both in their 70s, who succumbed to asthma attacks triggered by the plunge in temperature.

Reyes said they could not cope with the cold.

She said the health department has been sending health advisories to its various districts to prevent more such incidents.

On Dec. 28, the decomposing body of a 71-year-old man who had been missing for several days was found by a ditch on Gibraltar Road.

Dr. John Tinoyan, medico-legal officer of the Baguio health department, said the man, identified as Manuel Abad, died of hypothermia, a medical condition in which a person's body temperature falls below normal levels as a result of being in severe cold for a long time.

According to autopsy findings, Tinoyan said Abad was drunk and had fallen asleep by the ditch.

Although the temperature on Dec. 28 was slightly higher at 14 degrees Celsius, Tinoyan said Abad had been exposed to the elements.

"The cold weather was circumstantial because we have also to consider the location of the canal. Definitely, there was no foul play. But the most probable cause of Abad's death was hypothermia," said Tinoyan.

Reyes said Abad was a member of the Baguio Association of Retired Persons.

Aquino said the health department's records showed that the temperature in Baguio has continued to drop since Christmas Day.

On Dec. 25, the minimum temperature was 15 degrees; Dec. 26, 15.2 degrees; Dec. 27, 15 degrees; Dec. 28, 14 degrees; Dec. 29, 15 degrees; Dec. 30, 15.8 degrees; and Dec. 31, 13.2 degrees.

Last year, the coldest temperature in the city was recorded on Jan. 4 at 8.8 Celsius.

Solon blames House panel for absentee voting law delay

By Rocky Nazareno

THE CHANCES that the Absentee Voting Law would be passed in time for the national elections in 2004 have dimmed due to the "killer provisions" in the House version of the electoral measure.

Senate President Franklin Drilon also blamed the House contingent to the bicameral conference committee that is reconciling the two versions of the bill for "taking its sweet time in enacting the Absentee Voting Law."

Not enough time

Drilon said that unless the bill was passed this month, "there might not be enough time to prepare for a system of absentee voting in the 2004 elections."

The term "killer provisions" refers to the provisions in the House version of the bill, which are at odds with the provisions in the Senate version.

It is the two versions the bicameral conference committee must reconcile.

But, Drilon said, the Senate committee on constitutional amendments and revision of codes and laws had yet to submit a final version of the electoral measure for final ratification, "as members of the House refuse to cooperate in the bicameral talks aimed at reconciling the two versions of the bill."

"Members of the House seem reluctant to carry on with the bicameral talks," Drilon noted.

Conflicting versions

Diverging provisions in the two versions of the measure include the scope of coverage, with the Senate opting to allow all qualified Filipino citizens to vote, while the House measure would exclude permanent residents and immigrants to other countries.

The Senate version provides that absentee voters could vote for the President, Vice President, senators and party-list representatives, while the House version limits overseas voting to the President and Vice President only.

The mode of registration also differs, with the Senate version providing for a combination of personal or postal registration, while the House version calls for personal registration before an electoral board or in a Philippine embassy or consulate.

The Senate version requires a passport or alternative documents prescribed by the Commission on Election for registration, while the House version requires only a certified copy of a passport.

The House version proposes that absentee voting would be only for the May 2004 elections, while the Senate does not have such a clause in its version.

It was bleak holiday for fired LRT workers

OPPOSITION Sen. Edgardo Angara has called for a Senate inquiry into the plight of some 1,300 workers dismissed from the Light Rail Transit Authority in July 2000 who have been unable to collect their separation benefits to this day.

The workers were fired after staging a strike that crippled train operations.

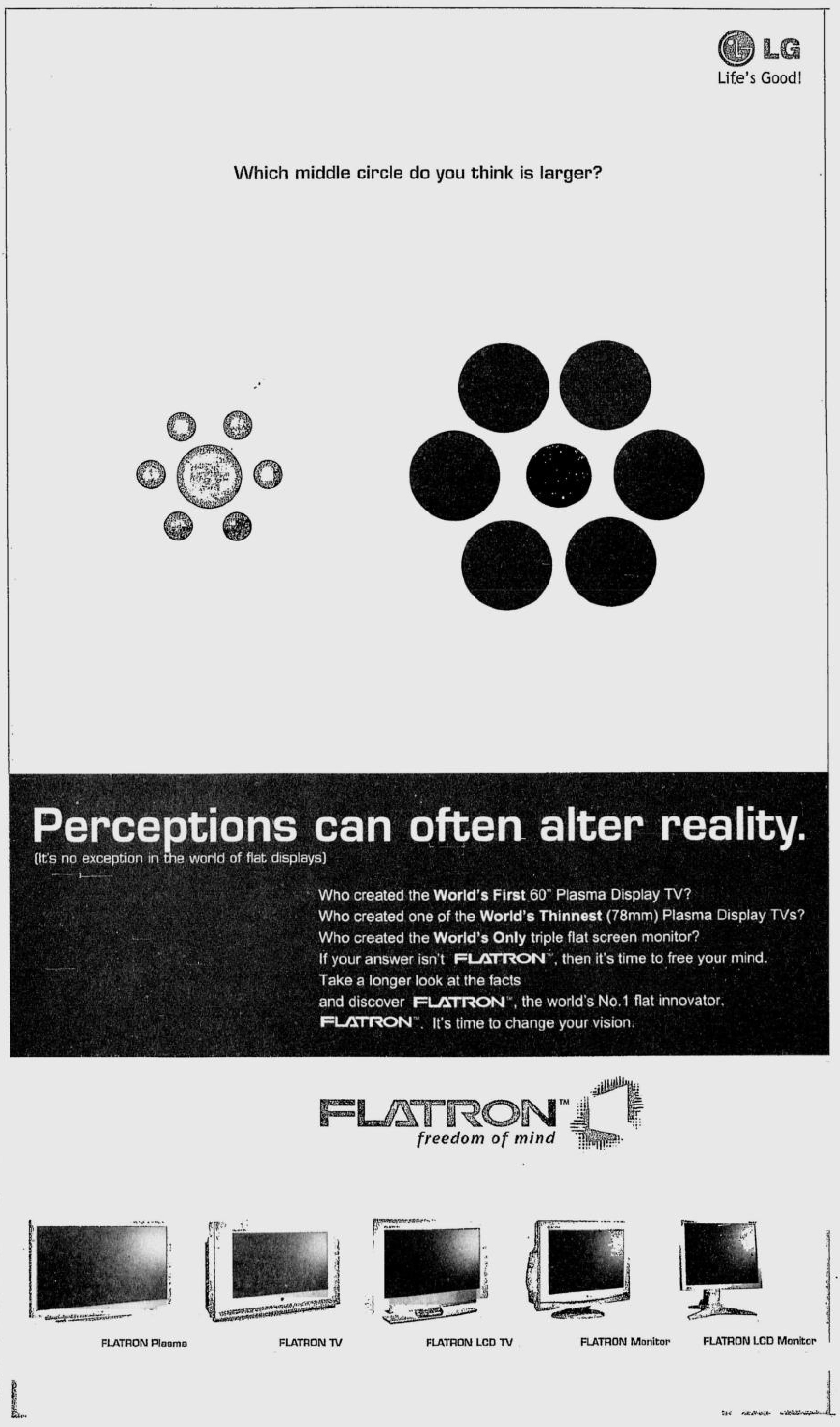
According to Angara, the Senate probe would focus on the broader issue of the "personnel dislocation that normally takes place when private corporations are taken over by the government."

Angara said 750 of the workers had received part of their separation pay but 550 of them had yet to get a single centavo.

The workers struck beginning July 25, 2000. Five days later, the LRTA decided not to renew the workers' contract, leading to their dismissal.

Angara noted that a P271-million fund had been allocated in the 2002 national budget by the Department of Budget and Management for the separation benefits of the workers after the National Labor Relations Commission ruled in the case.

"Since there is money for the separation benefits, there is no actual bar to the payment of the employees who have had three bleak Christmases since 2000," Angara said. *Rocky Nazareno*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OPINION

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Politics as usual

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo now looks at politics as the bane of our existence. Too much politics has been "hampering good, productive governance," she said in her shocker of a Rizal Day speech, and government programs "run the risk of being derailed by political infighting leading up to the (2004) elections." Because of "deep social and political divisions," she added, the 2004 polls could "go down in history as among our most bitterly contested elections ever." And since she was a key figure in "the divisive national events" of recent years, she had to make the sacrifice of removing herself from the next presidential race to help heal the deep divisions in Philippine society.

Other political leaders may publicly agree with the President's analysis that politics has become a poison to society, but they continue to act as if politics were the only reason for their own existence. They are not only unwilling to make the same sacrifice of putting their own political plans on hold, they continue to eat, breathe and talk politics.

The moment they recovered from their shock over her surprise withdrawal from the presidential race, Ms Macapagal's political allies scrambled to scout for a possible replacement. Speaker Jose de Venecia, her co-chair in Lakas-NUCD, said he favored fielding Sen.. Juan Flavier as their party's presidential candidate in next year's elections, saying the former health secretary was the party's strongest bet. Alternatively, De Venecia said, Lakas could nominate Sen. Robert Barbers, whom he called Mindanao's "White Hope." Other party stalwarts are said to be pushing hard for former President Fidel Ramos, whose term saw a rapid growth in the economy. Another Lakas leader was quoted as saying the door was open for former Education Secretary Raul Roco, who has been leading recent surveys on presidential preferences, to be the Lakas standard bearer.

Even opposition leaders felt free to offer their own suggestions of possible administration candidates. House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla named Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Loren Legarda among the possibilities. But in the end, he said, whoever the President "anoints" is going to be the candidate "to reckon with."

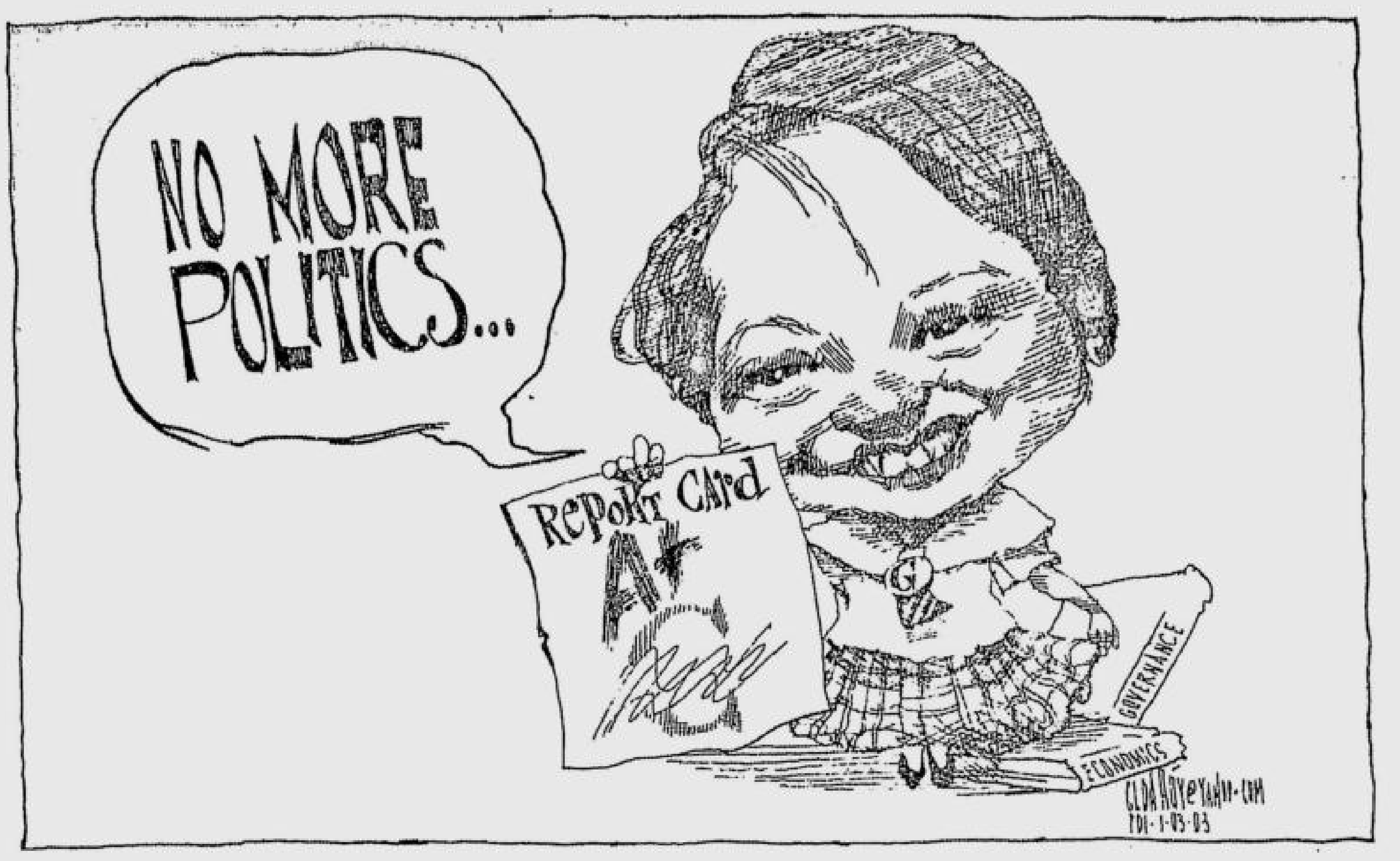
What is happening here? It is as if no one heard in full the President's speech, least of all her own party colleagues. It seems that the only thing they can believe is that she has withdrawn from the race. If they agree that politics has brought the nation to grief, they are not acting like they are prepared to eschew it at least for the next 12 months. They carry on as if there were no more urgent item on the national agenda than electing the next president. De Venecia has actually admitted that all this political maneuvering goes against Ms Macapagal's intention to make 2004 a year of "no politics and no-nonsense governance."

It is hard to think of a better way for the President to drive home the message that she wants a moratorium on partisan politics than giving up her plan to seek another six years in office. And yet her own party colleagues seem to be ignoring her call. What will it take to make them realize she means business?

Ms Macapagal has resisted every attempt by the media to bait her into revealing her preference for a successor. She told off a television newscaster who asked the question: "If you keep asking me political questions, you are again burdening me with politics." She said, "Maybe in December I will endorse someone, but between now and that time, I am not even thinking of that."

Maybe not even then. One of the three things she wants to achieve in the last year and a half of her term is holding clean and honest elections in 2004. She stands a better chance of fulfilling this objective by being non-partisan, which means she will not endorse or "anoint" a candidate. For the moment she supports a candidate, she commits not only her influence but also the resources of the government to ensuring victory for her candidate. If she does that, government money and manpower and even the muscle of the military and the police will again be employed for political purposes. Dirty tricks and misuse of government resources will not make the election clean and honest.

In the meantime, she should persuade her allies to set politics aside for the rest of the year. That is the only message she should bring to the Lakas executive committee when it meets next week.



Oh no, not FVR again, please!

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

OH NO, not Ramos again for President. Haven't we had enough of him yet? Has Lakas run out of presidential material? There must be somebody among the 70 million Filipinos who would make a better president than FVR. That Lakas leaders are looking again at the former President to be their standard bearer shows that the party is scraping the bottom of the barrel.

Why him? *Tinimbang na siya ngunit napatunayang kulang*. How short are our memories. Don't you remember that our present woes with our electric bills were caused by him? He signed so many onerous contracts with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), even beyond the time given him by Congress, that allowed them to collect payment for electric power they didn't even generate. Now we, the consumers, have to pay for all that. It was him who turned the National Power Corporation from a money earner to a monumental money loser.

Don't you remember the Centennial Expo? Don't you remember the PEA-Amari deal? The PEA (Public Estates Authority) became so rotten after that it had to be abolished.

Don't you remember the Oil Deregulation Law? FVR, all by his lonesome, shortened so much the transition period from a regulated to a deregulated oil industry that the law became a farce. So now, instead of competing, we have more oil companies, big and small, cozy in an oligopoly raising fuel prices and cheating consumers at will. All of that is courtesy of FVR. There are many others, but that's enough for starters.

But now Lakas has the temerity of suggesting foisting him on us again. *Hindi ba tayo marunong madala*? I would rather take my chances with FPJ. He may not be brilliant but, at least, he's honest, or so I heard.

A Lakas source, who understandably doesn't want to be identified, said in pushing for Ramos' candidacy: Ramos' record "speaks very well for itself." Yes it does. I have just cited his record.

But Davao Rep. Joel Almario probably explains it all when he said: "we have no other choice."

* * *

A letter-writer said yesterday that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's abdication may be a gambit to push a change in the Constitution. With her popular decision, he said, there would be little opposition to calling Congress to form a constituent assembly to fast-track Charter amendments. Then we can have a parliamentary system of government, GMA can run for member of Parliament in her district in Pampanga, and she can be elected prime minister. She remains the country's Chief Executive without violating her promise not to run for President in 2004.

Additionally, the constituent assembly—and with an assembly composed of congressmen, you can expect the worst—terms may be extended until the new Constitution is in effect. Thus, GMA will continue to serve as President beyond 2004 without her running for election. Thus we would have a two-term (technically) President who was never elected by the electorate—a Chief Executive forced on the people like a dictator.

These are both possible, but I would like to give the President more moral scruples than that. If she does that, she would lose the moral high ground. She is a heroine now; if she does that, she would be a villain, probably ending up lower than Marcos in the eyes of the people.

And that is why we should all oppose a Charter change, with or without Gloria. A parliamentary system, where the government both the legislative and executive branches would be run by the party in power in parliament, is not for us. We would be at the mercy of the members of Parliament, the counterparts of the present congressmen. Most of them run for Parliament. And considering the lack of quality, integrity and ability of the present congressmen, that is a horror to contemplate.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said she is quitting because there is too much politics. There would be a continuous power struggle in Parliament which would be controlled by the party with the most MPs or by a coalition of parties.

MPs in other countries belong to distinct parties with definite ideologies and political platforms. Our politicians are political butterflies who flit from party to party for convenience. Our parties have no definite platforms nor ideologies; they don't stand for anything. The party leaders just stand for themselves.

Thus, the prime ministership will be for sale. The MP who can buy the most votes of his fellow MPs will be elected as the country's leader. And what a leader he would be: a leader who buys votes and corrupts his fellow leaders to fulfill his ambition. Instead of buying the votes of citizen voters, he would buy the votes of elected MPs. The highest bidder gets the votes. So one vote can fetch millions of pesos. MPs will be running for office not to serve the people but "for the fund of it." And where would the future PMs get the money to buy the votes? From us, of course, the taxpayers.

Can you imagine the thievery that will go on in a parliamentary system? It's bad enough now. It will be worse with a Parliament.

* * *

KAPIHAN NOTES: Guest at Monday's Kapihan sa Manila (Hotel), the first for 2003, will be Manila Mayor Lito Atienza. He will show us his plans in the ongoing urban renewal of his city.

There oughta be a law

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE was an interesting article on our Metro page last week. That was the one that said movie fans may no longer see Vilma Santos and Lito Lapid on the silver screen. Not unless they want to give up being mayor of Lipa and governor of Pampanga respectively. Apparently, there's a provision in the Local Government Code that says mayors and governors "are prohibited from practicing their profession or engaging in any occupation other than the exercise of their functions as local chief executives."

But for this to happen, the group that has raised this issue must first win its case in court. Happily, that group, the Social Justice Society, is composed mostly of lawyers. They have cited Joey Lina as respondent for allowing Santos and Lapid to appear in movies.

I'm rooting for them. I've been arguing this for a long time now, and for all categories of public officials.

The usual justification for senators in particular—the Senate now having the dubious distinction of harboring the biggest number of fugitives from the silver screen, the hard court and television—is that there is no law against it. Well, at the very least, there is no law against people defecating in public too. Or at least there is no law specifically citing it, though there's one reproaching, and penalizing, scandalous behavior. There is no (explicit) law against it because none is needed. It is common sense. You do not normally expect anyone to relieve himself gleefully, or disconsolately, against the wall.

As it turns out, however, there is a law against public officials doing sidelines. If there's a prescription against local government officials reverting to their previous roles, in more ways than one, there should be one as well against national officials doing so. The principle applies equally, if not more so, to them. The principle applies as well to senators and congressmen who continue to host shows on television or do commentary on radio. The principle applies as well to public officials, elective or appointive, who do commercials.

That is so especially with senators who go all the way to endorse detergent. Surely there must be limits to how low one can sink? Or how low one would like to drag the office of senator to? After all, this was the same office occupied by Jose Laurel, Claro M. Recto, Lorenzo Tañada, Jose W. Diokno and Jovito Salonga.

One other justification I've heard for former entertainment personalities deciding not to become politicians is that at least they get to augment their income honestly. Would you rather they stole from the public coffers? I heard that expressly from Parañaque Mayor Joey Marquez when we appeared in a TV talk show some years ago. As I said then, and say now, I don't know that the one naturally precludes the other. Why should the fact that a public official spends part of his time appearing in movies mean that he is not spending the other part of his time pocketing public funds? It probably suggests he is: he could be greedy and want everything.

Marquez suggested one other thing, which is that appearing in TV shows allowed him to get additional funds for public service, his official budget not being enough for it. I did not wish to embarrass him by rolling on my sides with laughter.

There is in fact no justification for public officials making movies, hosting TV shows, making commentaries on radio. At the very least, it does a disservice both to public administration and to the various professions the entertainers left behind. Never mind that you betray the public trust by not living up to the expectation that you would devote your waking hours to make life better for the people who voted for you. For crying out loud, have some respect for your former profession. You cannot be both a good public official and a good entertainer at the same time—even if it is not always clear which profession is given more to being officious and which to entertaining. It's not just public office that will suffer from the infidelity, it is the movies too, it is sports too, it is the media too.

It would be a shame not to see Vilma Santos (never mind Lito Lapid) in the movies anymore? That is easily remedied. Santos should resign as mayor of Lipa posthaste, or not seek the post again next elections. That is the only thing to do.

In the case of public officials who continue to do work in media, it's plain unethical. And I will never tire of saying that the TV networks and radio stations that conspire to make this possible are conspiring against their country. You cannot be judge and defendant at the same time. You cannot be the object of scrutiny and the scrutinizer at the same time. Even when the public officials studiously avoid calling attention to themselves or their projects, they are parading a view of the world through the lens of self-interest. It's an insidious practice that ought to stop.

It's time we restored high standards, or plain decency, in public office and the other professions. It wasn't always like this. There was a time when public officials took their office seriously—though whether for good or ill is another matter entirely—and devoted their time exclusively to it. The same was true of movies and the media, which was why we had golden ages in both, neither of which is just the product of nostalgia. Chino Roces, for one, would never have allowed his newspaper to be cheapened or polluted that way. But for his beloved Manila Times to fall eventually into the clutches of Dante Ang! That is the unkindest cut of all.

Common sense being uncommon in these parts, we can always invoke the law. All we need do is make the one that applies to local officials apply to everybody else. And throw the book at 'em.

Withdrawal

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE DECISION of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to step down in 2004 is a strategic withdrawal executed to avert the plunge of the nation into what she herself described in her historic Dec. 30 speech as possibly "among our most bitterly contested elections ever."

"This is because of the deep political and social divisions that we have now," she said. A careful reading of her withdrawal speech shows that she was fully aware that she was central to this conflict, and that the only way to avoid sending the nation to the "category of backward" countries torn apart by powerful competing "selfish interests" was to remove herself from the center of conflict in order that the agenda of the 2004 election can be rescued from chaos.

Even as the President called on Filipinos to sacrifice petty interests in the service of national renewal and development, she sacrificed her ambition to seek another term in order to forestall the consequence of the country's growth being set back several years by lost opportunities due to political and social discord.

With the above context, I will argue that from whatever vantage the Macapagal administration is examined, the President was in a no-win situation. In the best of circumstances, no President of this country has ever achieved substantial results in just three and a half years, with the possible exception of Ramon Magsaysay, whose main achievement before he ended his four-year term was breaking the back of the Huk rebellion and restoring the tone of honesty and integrity in government. But these achievements merely laid the foundations for a planned economic takeoff and political reforms he envisaged for a second term aborted by his fatal plane crash.

President Macapagal inherited a legacy of turmoil not seen by any other previous presidents and whose viciousness has remained unmatched in the political annals of this country. Her accession to the presidency is the most controversial in the history of the Republic. While she stood on the path of constitutional succession as an elected vice president, she succeeded an elected president, Joseph Estrada, cloaked with an immensely popular mandate, after he was deposed by the unconventional method of people power.

Even though the accession of Ms Macapagal was accorded legal legitimacy by the full weight of the Supreme Court, her legitimacy remains under a cloud. Estrada and his die-hard supporters, including his constituency, composed of the poor, have never recognized her legitimacy. This pro-Estrada constituency not only staged a rebellion against the new government barely five months after its accession. They have also denied cooperation with the new regime and has been a main source of destabilization of the government with efforts to undermine political institutions which normally underpin democratic government.

This government thus inherited a legacy of deeply polarized politics fueled by the legitimacy issue. This polarization was underlined by the May 2001 senatorial election which reflected the fragmentation of the Senate—clearly embedding the toxin of political gridlock.

If walking into government in a permanent state of siege and doubts over its legitimacy (something not experienced by previous governments) was tough enough, running it in the wake of the 1997 financial crisis and in the midst of the global economic showdown is probably the worst possible condition to refuel economic growth and build a successful reelection campaign. The administration did manage to post modest economic growth relative to growth in most Asian economies.

But for an administration seeking reelection, low growth rates, plus the spiraling budget deficits spelled insurmountable obstacles to a successful reelection campaign. The deficits crippled economic expansion. They drained the life blood of political programs and patronage designed to create jobs and stimulate economic activity, even only in the short-term.

With the Estrada-based segment of the opposition waging a guerrilla war against the administration, there was nothing that the regime could do right in the eyes of this intractable opposition. President Macapagal never won the poor constituency of Estrada to her side; the poor were unmoved by, and have not accepted, the Supreme Court's legitimation of the successor government.

Efforts by President Macapagal to buy loyalty and—such as giving the opposition Cabinet or senior government appointments—only proved to be politically costly and damaged the government's fidelity to the reformist spirit of Edsa II. They alienated allies who helped her in the coalition to depose Estrada. Her Edsa coalition is in tatters, and she has not rebuilt, and was not allowed to rebuild, institutional structures—like political parties—that should put some order and discipline in the electoral system.

Since the early days of her presidency, the administration has been plagued by corruption scandals. While they remain unsubstantiated, they have damaged confidence in the government's integrity and credibility to mount a corruption campaign. It was only recently that firm decisions and actions were taken to stop corruption-ridden deals—such as those on Piatco and PEA.

The tumbling of presidential popularity ratings and business confidence index is a consequence of the above-mentioned conditions. They are symptoms of the specter pointing to electoral defeat which stared the President in the face as she agonized over how to govern an unruly society and over the legacy her presidency can bequeath to the nation.

Her Dec. 30 valedictory understated her dilemma and capitulation. "If I were to run," she said, "it would require a major political effort on my part." There was nothing she could have done to stave off a humiliating political disaster and the plunge of the nation to its preferred path of political disarray. The President saw the signs of political doom. She cut her losses. She acted wisely and on time to halt the slide. But she can't do it alone.

You don't have to be a true believer

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

MY daughter says "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" is "the gayest movie ever." At one of the previews we were privileged to watch before Christmas, the audience was hooting and giggling as Sam and Frodo bantered and bickered, especially after a half-crazed Frodo lunged at Sam and was put off only by Sam's admonition: "Mister Frodo! It's me, your Sam!"

I also hear that there are "Very Secret Diaries" circulating via e-mail allegedly kept by Frodo, Gandalf, Aragorn and other main characters in this epic. The "Diaries" purport to convey the "real" thoughts and feelings of the fellowship of the ring and the other personas that populate JRR Tolkien's tale. In one such "Diary," Aragorn reports that they have had nothing to eat but elvish bread for days and at that point, Gimli the Dwarf is starting to look good enough for roasting. Aragorn also calls Legolas "Leggy" and drops hints of homoerotic attraction. He also ends every entry with "Still not King."

True believers, rise not in arms. I have a suspicion that people who feel compelled to draw gay inferences from the male bonding of Frodo and company, or who go to all the trouble to send up Tolkien's Middle Earth and its inhabitants are really devotees who feel they must temper their devotion with humor and cynicism lest they be taken for geeks or psychos.

Or maybe because the "Lord of the Rings" has proven to be such a wildly popular movie franchise, Frodo fans who worshipped in obscurity for decades now feel they must rise above the pack and adopt a pose of indifference, if not irreverence.

* * *

WHATEVER. True believer or not, and even if you failed to catch the first installment of this cinematic trilogy (but how could you?!), go watch "Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers."

You're in for three hours of grand filmic spectacle—sweeping panoramas, complex, finely choreographed battle scenes, grandeur, and even a "best actor" performance from an animated figure, the slimy Gollum (Smeagol in a previous life) who looks like a cross between Cachupoy and a tarsier.

A critic has called "Two Towers" a "transition film," bridging the story of Frodo's heroic quest from the finding of the ring and the formation of the fellowship, to the ring's destruction in the fires of Mt. Doom and the ascension of humankind to leadership of Middle Earth. But "Two Towers" the movie can be viewed by itself, a rousing experience even when removed from the context of the other movies.

As the movie opens, the fellowship has been broken. Frodo and Sam, later joined by Gollum, are left by themselves to make their way to Mordor where they are supposed to destroy the Ring of Power by throwing it into the fires of Mt. Doom. The other hobbits, Merry and Pippin, have been abducted by a band of uruk-hai, the monster army manufactured by the errant wizard Saruman. Gandalf has fallen with the terrifying Balrog to the very bowels of the earth. Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas are left to bury the fallen Boromir, rescue Merry and Pippin, and defend the human kingdoms from falling into darkness.

* * *

IF "The Fellowship of the Ring" introduced us to Middle Earth and to the main players in the quest, "The Two Towers," a reference to the twin outposts of evil, Orthnac in Isengard and Minas Mordor, carries the story further and fleshes out the characters.

Women who lusted after Legolas (Orlando Bloom) will have more than enough views of his sweet visage in the film, as well as several scenes that have him showing off his athleticism (check out his "skateboarding" during the pivotal Battle of Helm's Deep). But the real heartthrob of the trilogy could yet turn out to be Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), who's given more room to stretch his acting chops in this movie, especially in a flashback to his parting from Arwen (Liv Tyler), his elven lover.

Elijah Wood as Frodo is truly remarkable. In his eyes are reflected the perils he has had to endure in the course of the quest, and the dying of the light of innocence that once glimmered as he lived the life of a simple hobbit from the Shire. This is a really astonishing piece of acting, since the three movies were filmed simultaneously and he must have had a hell of a time keeping track of where his character was at any one point in the filming.

* * *

STILL, it's Gollum, an animated character based on the voice and movement of Andy Serkis, who has the best "acting" moments, especially when he demonstrates the tortured schizophrenic mind of the hobbit corrupted by the ring, something that wasn't so clear-cut in the book.

But even if you aren't exactly a follower of the fellowship, or if you have yet to read the books, the "LOTR" movies are well worth your movie money. At one of the previews I attended, sponsored by the Embassy of New Zealand, the ambassador had a hard time restraining his patriotic pride that his small country should be the site of Middle Earth. But he did wonder how director Peter Jackson could have erased with such facility the millions of sheep and cattle that outnumber New Zealand's human inhabitants.

The ambassador had reason to preen. The film is truly a luscious visual tribute to New Zealand, boasting of vistas as varied as soaring mountainscapes and arid desert, misty swamps and green, green meadows. Reports have it that the trilogy took life when Jackson, perhaps while gazing upon a breathtaking view of New Zealand countryside, commented that his country would be an ideal setting for an epic movie "like Lord of the Rings." From then it was but a short hop to filming "LOTR." So we have New Zealand to thank for inspiring this inspiring film.

Rivers and crocs

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

ON A RECENT trip to Bangkok I spent the better part of a day away from the shopping malls and explored the Chao Phraya river. In the morning we rented a fast craft and traveled inside the canals to get a different view of the city. We were supposed to see the so-called floating market which, based on photographs in tourist brochures, looked more like a swarm of bancas with vendors on board selling fish, vegetables, fruits and other goods. While we were advised to get there before seven in the morning, we insisted this was a vacation and refused get out of bed before eight, thus all we encountered was one fat, lady in traditional attire selling over-priced souvenirs. This was not the floating market we expected. Nevertheless, the cruise through the various canals gave me a view of Bangkok most tourists miss on their visit to the city. One saw houses by the river, many on stilts with huge earthenware jars for fresh water. Of course, there was a lot of laundry left out to dry that provided clues into the people in the houses and their preferences in underwear. Most surprising was that some people actually took a bath and brushed their teeth in the canal water. One cannot do this in the Pasig.

In the afternoon we took the boats that take Thais and some intrepid tourists up and down the Chao Phraya river, we even took one boat that traveled across from bank to bank. All the way I was reminded of the Pasig River and the series of canals and *esteros* that once made some tourists compare Manila with Venice. Of course, Manila had no boatmen on gondolas singing Italian arias but people and goods traveled along the Pasig and the *esteros*. The big difference between Bangkok and Manila is that the Thais still use their river system to travel around the city. Sometimes the river is a better alternative to the roads blocked by traffic. Our attempts with those wonderful air-conditioned ferries that took people along the Pasig from Guadalupe to Escolta failed. What more can one say but *sayang*. What made me feel worse was the realization that the Chao Phraya used to be as polluted as the Pasig and yet they were able to clean it up such that fish now swim in the less polluted parts of the river. We are a long way off with the Pasig.

If you take the Bangkok canal tour some of the optional stops are a snake or crocodile farm. Crocodiles must have been part of the Chao Phraya River in the same way that they were part of the Pasig River especially the part that leads out to Laguna de Bay. One of the most frightening illustrations in Paul P. de la Gironiere's "Twenty years in the Philippines" first published in French in 1855 shows a Filipina trying to run away from a crocodile that we presume had her for lunch. Crocodiles were the stuff of nightmares in the 19th century. Rizal has a crocodile scene in the "Noli me tangere." He also made a small sculpture popularly known as "Mother's Revenge" showing a crocodile with a squealing puppy in its mouth and the mother dog vainly trying to save the pup by biting the crocodile's back.

Yet, the most engaging 19th-century crocodile stories are by the Frenchman Gironiere who fancied himself as the "Lord of Jala-jala." He describes how various people, including his wife's maid, were devoured by crocodiles and details how he killed a 27 foot long monster that had a circumference of 11 feet measured from under the armpits. I remembered this famous crocodile because in an English translation of Mallat's "Les Philippines," originally published in Paris in 1843, the translator has the crocodile killing Gironiere instead of the other way round. While Gironiere takes all the credit for killing the crocodile in his book Dr. Benito Legarda, citing contemporary accounts, says that the credit should be given to George Robert Russell, cofounder of the famous trading house Russell and Sturgis. The head of this extraordinary creature is now in Harvard University.

What they did to the croc after is more fascinating. Gironiere wanted to preserve the whole thing as a trophy but couldn't transport it to his house. He asked for suggestions and this is what came up:

"...One man wanted the skin, the Indians begged for the flesh, to dry it, and use it as a specific against asthma...Somebody else desired to have the fat, as an antidote to rheumatic pains; and finally, my worthy priest demanded that the stomach be opened, in order to ascertain how many Christians the monster had devoured. Every time, he said, that a cayman eats a Christian he swallows a large pebble; thus, the number of pebbles we should find in him would positively indicate the number of the faithful whom his enormous stomach had afforded sepulture..."

When the stomach was opened they found the horse it had taken for breakfast divided into seven or eight pieces and 150 pounds weight of stones of varying sizes that made the priest wonder if it was possible for the crocodile to have eaten so many Christians. Gironiere took the 450 pound head but didn't have enough chemicals to preserve it so he skinned, dried and whitened it and later presented it as a gift to his friend Russell. When I do visit Harvard I will look up this crocodile head and reflect on a time when crocodiles roamed our rivers.

* * *

Comments are welcome at ambeth@admu.edu.ph

Carrot, egg or coffee bean?

COMMENTARY

Socrates B. Villegas

THE GREAT need of the world right now is peace. The threat of war looms over us. The single world super power is threatening to wage war in order to safeguard the peace of the world. How contradictory. We want to secure peace for the world and we do it by war. The only way to peace is peace. Peace cannot be achieved, secured and promoted through the weapons of war.

If we want world peace, we must pray. A world at prayer is a world at peace. If we want peace, we must forget selfish ambitions and think of the common good. If we want peace, we must promote unity and reconciliation and extend the hand of reconciliation. If we want peace, we must set our hearts on this task. One hundred percent intentions to acquire peace. If the intention is clear, the mechanism will appear. The pursuit of peace stands on four legs: truth, justice, love and freedom, according to Blessed John XXIII.

Truth will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his rights, but also his own duties towards others. Justice will build peace if in practice, everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfills his duties towards them. Love will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit which they possess. Freedom will build peace and make it thrive, if, in the choice of the means to that end people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions.

The need of the nation right now is national unity. We can do so many things if we are united. The poor can be better served, the youth can be better educated, the homeless can be better protected, the problem of corruption can be eliminated, laws can be more speedily passed and implemented if we are united.

The will of God for us is unity. He came so that all may be one. There can be no unity without prayer. There can be no unity without God. Let our common love for God be our point of unity. Let us not allow our unity to be simply grounded on the needs of the present. Let us root for unity in God. In this way, our unity will go beyond political plans and economic programs. Our unity will be grounded in our faith and trust in God Almighty.

President's example

OUR beloved president has shown us a fine example of pursuing unity for the world and for the nation.

Our pursuit of peace and unity needs three keys: prayer, heroic selflessness and strength of will. The President sought the guidance of God and not politicians in declaring her decision not to run in 2004. It was a heroic decision that qualified her to ascend the ranks of statesmen and patriots. We pray for her so that she may have the strength of will to pursue her vision for the nation against all odds—for the sake of the nation—for the glory of God.

Let me share with you this modern parable about crisis and problems:

A daughter complained to her father about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed that as one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to boil. In one he placed carrots, in the second he placed eggs, and the last he placed ground coffee beans. He let them sit and boil, without saying a word.

The daughter sucked her teeth and waited impatiently, wondering what he was doing. In about twenty minutes he turned off the burners. He fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them in another bowl. Then he ladled the coffee out and placed it in a mug.

Turning to her he asked, "Darling, what do you see?"

"Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied.

He brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. She smiled as she tasted its rich aroma.

She humbly asked, "What does it mean Father?"

He explained that each of them had faced the same adversity: boiling water but each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. But after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

"Which are you," he asked his daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

How about us, my countrymen? Are we the carrot that seems hard, but with pain and adversity do we wilt and become soft, lose your strength?

Are we like the egg, which starts off with a malleable heart? Are we fluid spirits, but after a death, a breakup, business bankruptcy, or a layoff have we become hardened and stiff? The shell looks the same, but have we become bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and heart?

Or are we like the coffee bean? The bean changes the hot water, the thing that is bringing the pain, to its peak flavor when it reaches 212 degrees Fahrenheit. When the water gets the hottest, it just tastes better.

If we are like the bean, when things are at their worst, we get better and make things better around us.

How do we handle adversity? Are we a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?

THEY SAID

Joe's words

"That is just Joe (De Venecia) talking."

—Sen. Juan Flavier on Speaker Jose De Venecia's support for him to the presidency

Wrong counting

Its too early...they may just have added one plus one and came up with four."

—Sen. Juan Flavier on running in the 2004 presidential elections

What can we do?

"If it is destiny, if it's God's will, then what can I do?"

—Sen. Juan Flavier when asked what to do if Lakas offers him to be its standard-bearer

GMA's answer to Alcuaz's question mark

MR. LINGGOY Alcuaz, the man who helped bring down ex-president Joseph Estrada with his exclamation point [!] must have been the most surprised when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced that she would not run in the 2004 presidential election.

Just after Mr. Alcuaz's new question mark [?] campaign hit the news, President Arroyo seemed to have given him a very straightforward answer. The exclamation point in the President's retort cannot be missed.

According to Mr. Alcuaz, the [?] campaign provides a mechanism for the people to air their "questions" to the Arroyo administration. Focusing on issues that beleaguered the government, such as the Jimenez extradition, these questions are more like criticisms prodding the government to give a definite rejoinder that will explain how the country can move forward in the face of these controversies.

The President's answer was brief and clear, reverberating with the determination and decisiveness that one finds in an inspiring leader—she will not run in 2004.

The sentence was simple. It was not said with pomposity typical of on orator at the highlight of his piece. But it resounded with a million exclamation points.

By shunning the grimy political game that characterizes our country's preparation for a presidential race, she could concentrate on the tasks that the government should have accomplished early on if it had not been sidetracked by too much politicking.

Now the stage is set for the beginning of a long process of rebuilding our nation; of emerging from the ruins brought by too much greed and the vested interests of political opportunists.

To some this may just be a straightforward answer by the President to questions that hound the nation's political and economic realm. To our countrymen, this is more like an answered prayer.

—AURELIO CUETO-SANDIG
#105 Lumabag Street,
Solano, Nueva Ecija

Reactions to GMA's speech

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo displayed an act of heroism on Rizal day when she announced that she will not run in 2004.

Instead she will concentrate on healing the deep divisions in our society, strengthening the economy to create jobs, ridding the bureaucracy of red tape and corruption and setting the stage for a clean and honest election in 2004.

Many of the President's supporters were saddened by her decision but some were glad that her remaining term would be free of political baggage. Ex-Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Corazon Aquino hailed her "firm desire to pursue the development of our country." Speaker Jose De Venecia lauded her "leadership, humility and wisdom." The business community, assured that "politics will be the least of businessmen's worries" in the coming year, gave her a thumbs up.

Even opposition and staunch Arroyo critics, like Sen. Edgardo Angara, praised the President "for her statesmanship and personal sacrifice." Even those who were initially adamant such as Sen. Aquilino Pimentel could not help but say, "The opposition should give her a chance and set aside partisan politics for the good of the nation."

It could have been a perfect bonding of conflicting political parties if not for the ever-present party-poopers. Sen. Tessie Oreta, infamous for her *balato* tag, was quoted as saying, "Had the President made this announcement right after she assumed office, she could have mobilized public support at the crucial stage of her administration."

If Oreta were in the shoes of the President it would be more likely that she would cling to the post (the way she clung at the helm of the Estrada administration) until all hell broke loose.

Those with a paranoid bent did not miss the show. House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla called for more vigilance, afraid that the President just backed down for a while waiting for the right time to pounce on the opposition.

But the worst of those who said their price about the President's decision had no right to say it. Ex-president Estrada, of course, led the bandwagon saying that "[the President] should put [that] in writing, come what may." Maybe, it's his way of saying that he wants a copy of the President's speech. Or maybe he wants PGMA to sign her real name on it.

If President Arroyo will be remembered in the annals of heroism, some of our leaders, sad to say, will remain heroes of joke books, the boob tube and B-movies.

—RHOZ VENALEZ,
spokesperson,
Balikatan People's Alliance

Relevant oaths and pledges

FILIPINO civil servants abhor any kind of corruption in their respective agencies. They blow the whistle the moment they sense anything irregular or anomalous.

This mindset gets strengthened every time they recite their pledge entitled "*Panunumpa Ng Kawani Ng Gobyerno*," which states, among other precepts, that "*Magsasalita ako laban sa katiwalian at pagsasamantala.*"

In another pledge they also recite during their Monday morning flag-raising ceremony entitled "*Panunumpa ng Lingkod Bayan sa Bagong Milenyo*," they likewise assert that "*Ako'y magsisiwalat nang ano mang kasamaan o katiwalian na aabot sa aking kaalaman.*"

Hence, any government official or employee who gets to blow the whistle earns for himself a coveted membership in an elite "Civil Service Whistle-Blowers' Club."

—T. B. ABAYAN 13-A Banning St., North
Fairview, Quezon City

AN ACT OF COURAGE AND PATRIOTISM

The Makati Business Club congratulates and thanks President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for her great and selfless act of courage and patriotism in choosing to pursue the national interest over the opportunity to seek a six-year term as president in 2004.

We stand solidly behind the President and will do all we can to help achieve over the next eighteen months her avowed goals of economic progress, national unity and setting the stage for clean elections in 2004.

Towards this end, we call on all sectors to heed the President's call to set aside partisan politics for at least the next twelve months so that we can all focus on the urgent need to put our country back on track. In a world fraught with risk and uncertainty, it behooves us as a nation to rise to the occasion and get our act together if we are to emerge stronger and able to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive world. There is much work to do and no time to waste!

MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS OUR NATION, OUR PRESIDENT AND ALL OF US.

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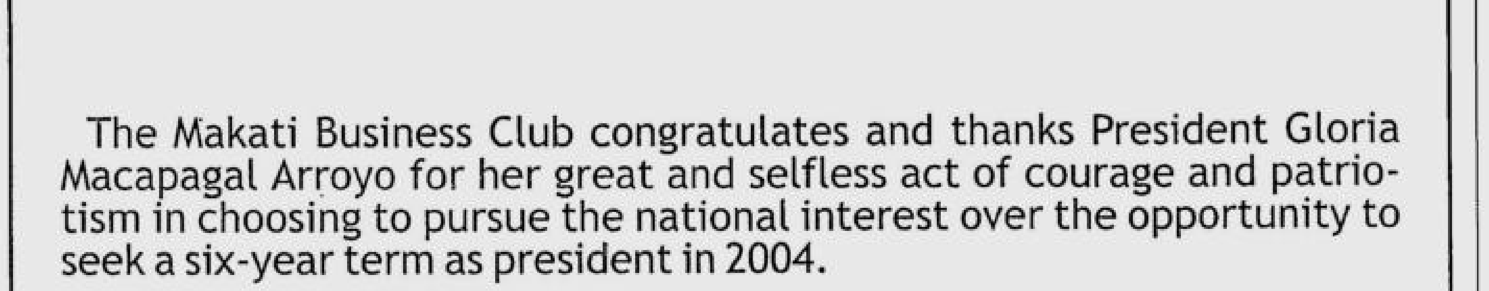

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BUSINESS INQUIRER

Intensive air campaign to open attack on Iraq

NEWS ANALYSIS

Will Dunham

WASHINGTON—During the 1991 Gulf War, the US-led coalition that expelled Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait spent five full weeks pounding Iraqi targets from the air with jets and missiles before launching the ground war.

In a possible second war against Iraq, the air campaign preceding large-scale ground operations would be massive in scale but much shorter in length and would feature a greater reliance on precision-guided munitions, the so-called smart bombs, military analysts say.

"We have far, far more precision weapons now than we did before," said John Warden, the retired US Air Force colonel who was a key architect of the 1991 air campaign. He said the air campaign that would open a new Iraq war "really shouldn't be more than four or five days." "We can operate against the Iraqis from the air with near impunity. They simply can't touch you," Warden added.

Anthony Cordesman, a defense analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank, said, "There would be a period of no more than seven to 10 days in which the United States would conduct an intensive air campaign to open up the Iraqi forces for ground maneuvers directed at the centers of Iraqi political power." Advances in precision-guided munitions could enable US pilots in a single sortie to knock out multiple targets that previously would have necessitated many sorties, experts said.

While smart bombs won a lot of attention during the Gulf War, the fact is that more than 90 percent of the bombs used by US forces were unguided, free-fall munitions—"dumb" bombs.

Warden said precision-guided munitions could comprise something like 80 percent of the bombs used this time around.

The smart bombs used during the Gulf War employed relatively crude technology. The bombs were fitted with a sensor to track a laser beam that was pointed at a designated target. But this system was hampered in bad weather because rain, clouds and even dust can foil the laser targeting.

A new generation of smart bombs, including the Joint Direct Attack Munition, or JDAM, does not mind a little rain. Rather than relying on lasers, they use Global Positioning System satellites for guidance to the exact position of a target.

Warden, who now heads the consulting firm Venturist Inc., said one quality that was "utterly missing" during the Gulf War was a real-time reconnaissance capability—the ability to know what was going on in the field as events were unfolding, rather than perhaps hours later.

He said the deficiency now has been addressed with the advent of two unmanned aircraft: the Predator, which can serve as a spy in the sky and is armed with Hellfire missiles, and the Global Hawk, which cruises at extremely high altitudes and can survey large geographic areas with pinpoint accuracy.

Experts predicted differences in strategy reflecting the differences in the goals in 1991 and 2003.

In 1991, the United States had the limited objective of liberating Kuwait after Iraq occupied it in 1990, not toppling the Iraqi president. This time, US President George W. Bush has made it clear that "regime change"—ousting Saddam—would be the goal in order to ensure Iraq does not menace the world with weapons of mass destruction.

Cordesman forecast "a nationwide campaign designed basically to knock the system out rather than a limited one to achieve objectives in the Kuwaiti theater of operations." Military analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute think tank added, "We're going to precisely target the pillars of Iraqi military power while trying to leave almost all of the civilian elements of Iraqi infrastructure intact." A key task in the opening hours and days of a war against Iraq would be to wreck the Iraqi air defenses, analysts said.

"The real objective is to collapse the command and control centers—especially the integrated air defense around Baghdad because that is dangerous, much more lethal than it was in 1991," said military analyst Benjamin Works of the Strategic Issues Research Institute think tank.

The Iraqis, Works said, have mounted some of their old fixed surface-to-air missile launchers on truck beds to make them mobile. They have put in place fiber-optic cabling in a bid to field a military communications system "that we cannot tap, cannot monitor and cannot easily destroy," he added.

Plus, Works said, the Iraqis may be using freshly smuggled radar equipment such as the Kolchuga early-warning radar system from Ukraine reputed to be able to detect all types of aircraft, even stealth warplanes. The United States has accused Ukraine of selling the system to Iraq. Ukraine denied it.

Thompson said limited numbers of US ground troops, mostly special operations forces, would be active on the first day of hostilities.

"First of all, they'll be doing the targeting activities that they performed in Afghanistan," Thompson said. "Second, they will be securing bases and jumping-off points for follow-on forces. Thirdly, they will be attempting to seize control of certain key sites where we suspect there will be weapons of mass destruction. And fourth, if our intelligence is adequate, they'll be looking for Saddam himself."

REUTERS

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

UN experts continue search as US sends more troops to Gulf

BAGHDAD—UN arms inspectors probed four Iraqi sites Wednesday in their search for the weapons of mass destruction that Baghdad denies having, as the United States prepared to send new troops to the Gulf region.

The new inspections came as Baghdad urged the Arab world to take inspiration from North Korea, which relaunched its nuclear program in the face of US criticism.

"We Arabs need to revise our behavior towards the United States, as North Korea has done, to be respected," said the daily newspaper, Babel, owned by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday.

"Arabs need to learn the lesson from the Korean example to mobilize in order to stop an attack on Iraq and prevent a US-Zionist crusade in the Arab world," the paper continued.

It accused Washington of trying to blackmail other nations in order to maintain its exclusive nuclear status.

The rhetoric followed a US announcement that a US Army infantry division of up to 17,000 troops had been given orders for deployment to the Gulf region.

"The Third Infantry Division received notification for deployment on Monday night," Captain James Brownlee, information officer for the division based at Fort Stewart, Georgia, told AFP.

"No timeline or designation has been determined. The region of deployment is Southwest Asia," which includes the Gulf, he said.

The Third Division consists of three mechanized brigades and one aviation brigade.

The Second Brigade, several thousand troops based in Fort Stewart, is already in Kuwait, Brownlee said.

The United States already has about 65,000 troops in the Gulf and Turkey and earlier this month announced plans to send another 50,000 by early January.

Last Friday, reports said two aircraft carriers, including the USS George Washington, and several other ships, had been ordered to prepare to leave for the Gulf in 96 hours.

The Iraqi military said one person was killed and two others wounded Wednesday in an air raid carried out by US and British warplanes in the Basra region of southern Iraq.

"Enemy warplanes bombed civilian installations in Basra province, where an Iraqi was killed and two others were wounded," the state news agency INA quoted a military spokesperson as saying.

Baghdad does not recognize the exclusion zones over southern and northern Iraq that have been enforced by US and British aircraft since the end of the 1991 Gulf War without being sanctioned by any UN resolution.

The US Central Command said planes had fired Wednesday near the city of Al Qurnah at an Iraqi air defense radar deemed a threat to allied forces.

The command did not mention any casualties but insisted that coalition aircraft "never target civilian populations or infrastructure and go to painstaking lengths to avoid injury to civilians and damage to civilian facilities." Meanwhile, teams of experts in missiles and chemical and biological weapons inspected sites in the Baghdad region after leaving their headquarters in the capital's Canal Hotel.

UN spokesperson Hiro Ueki said a team of missile experts returned to Al-Harith factory, 40 km north of Baghdad, after a previous visit on Dec. 19.

"A few days ago, Iraqi representatives requested that UNMOVIC (UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission) remove tags from SA-2 missiles to facilitate required maintenance tasks," he said in his daily activity report.

"The missile experts took this opportunity to reinspect the facility," which is part of the vast Al-Taji military complex, he said.

Biological experts visited a beer brewery near Baghdad and a bottling plant in the capital, while a chemical team searched Al-Majd Al-Amiriyah stores for electronics and corrosion-resistant materials, 30 km to the west, said Ueki. *AFP*

'SHEEPISH' ANNUM

SOUTH Korean children run their hands through sheep, Jan 2, which were put on display at one of Seoul's main amusement parks to mark the start of the "Year of the Sheep" according to the Chinese astrological calendar. The Year of the Sheep according to the Lunar New Year calander will officially begin Feb. 1. AFP

Report: Mossad behind 1990 assassination of Canadian linked to Iraq's 'supergun'

BRUSSELS—The Israeli foreign spy agency Mossad was behind the 1990 assassination in Brussels of a Canadian engineer implicated in Iraq's drive to build a "supergun," a newspaper reported Thursday.

Belgian police had known "for several weeks" that Mossad was involved in the shooting on Mar. 22, 1990 of Gerald Bull, La Derniere Heure said.

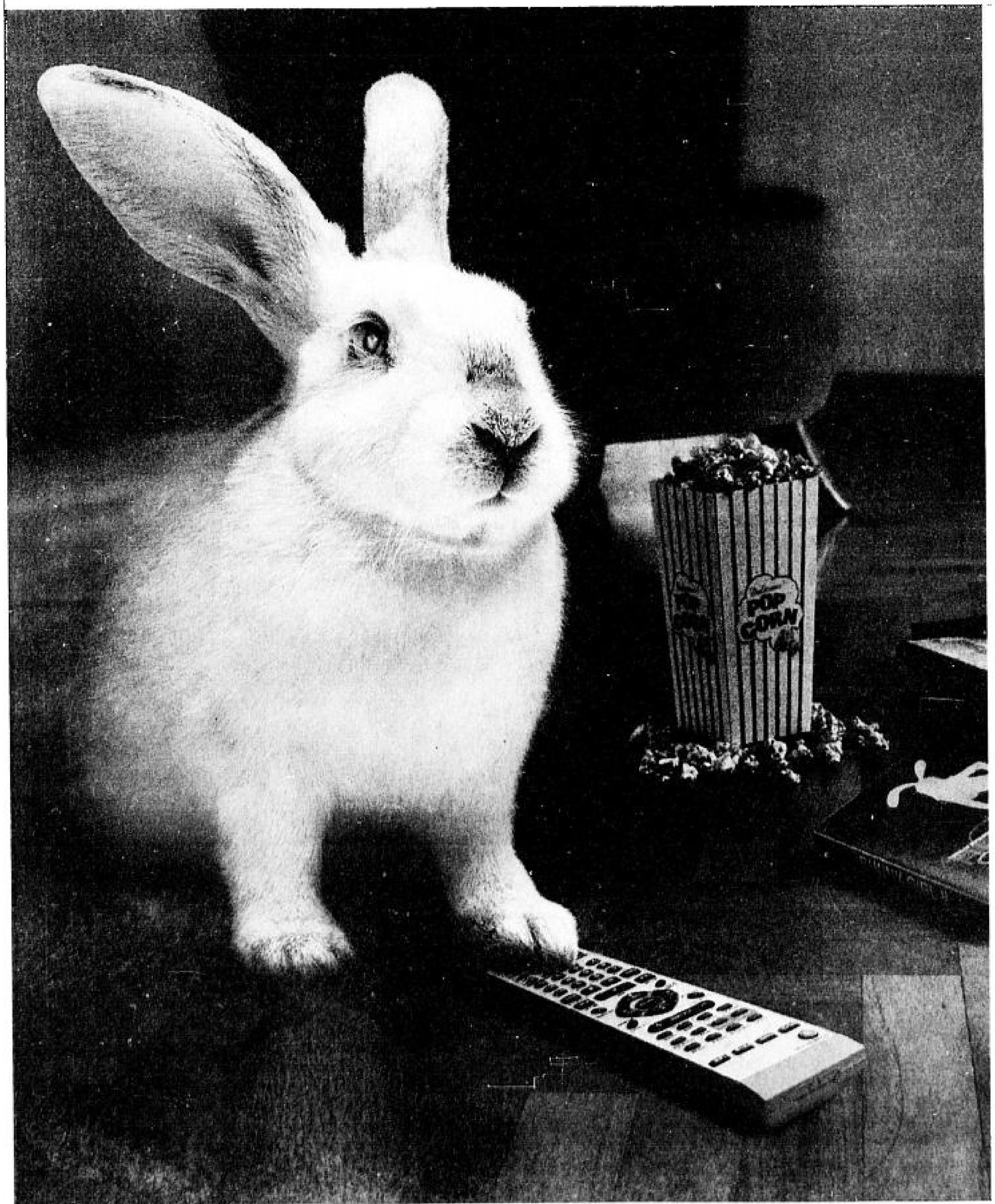
The bullet-riddled body of Bull, 62, was found in the entrance hall of his Brussels home just before the Canadian was about to furnish Iraq with a cannon capable of firing shells up to 1,500 km, the paper said.

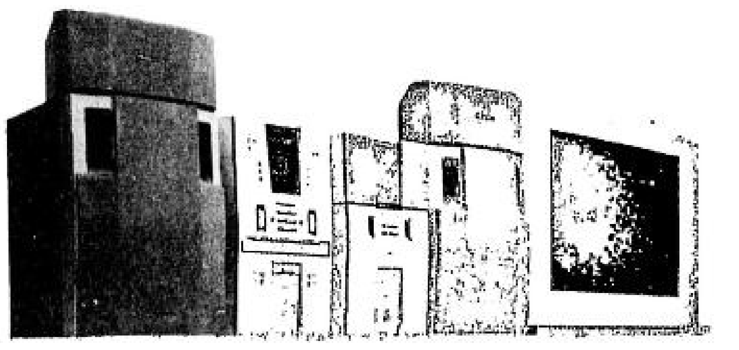
Mossad was suspected at the time, along with the CIA and Iranian intelligence, but the Belgian police investigation failed to make any headway.

But investigators had recently been given information "originating from a former British possession in Central America"—possibly Belize—that pointed the finger at a Mossad marksman, La Derniere Heure quoted a prosecutor as saying.

The assassin had long been in possession of a jewel which Bull always wore but which was missing from the engineer's body, the newspaper said.

Bull's assassination coincided with the seizure of large metal tubes in several countries, including Britain, Greece and Italy, which were allegedly destined for the Iraqi supergun. *AFP*





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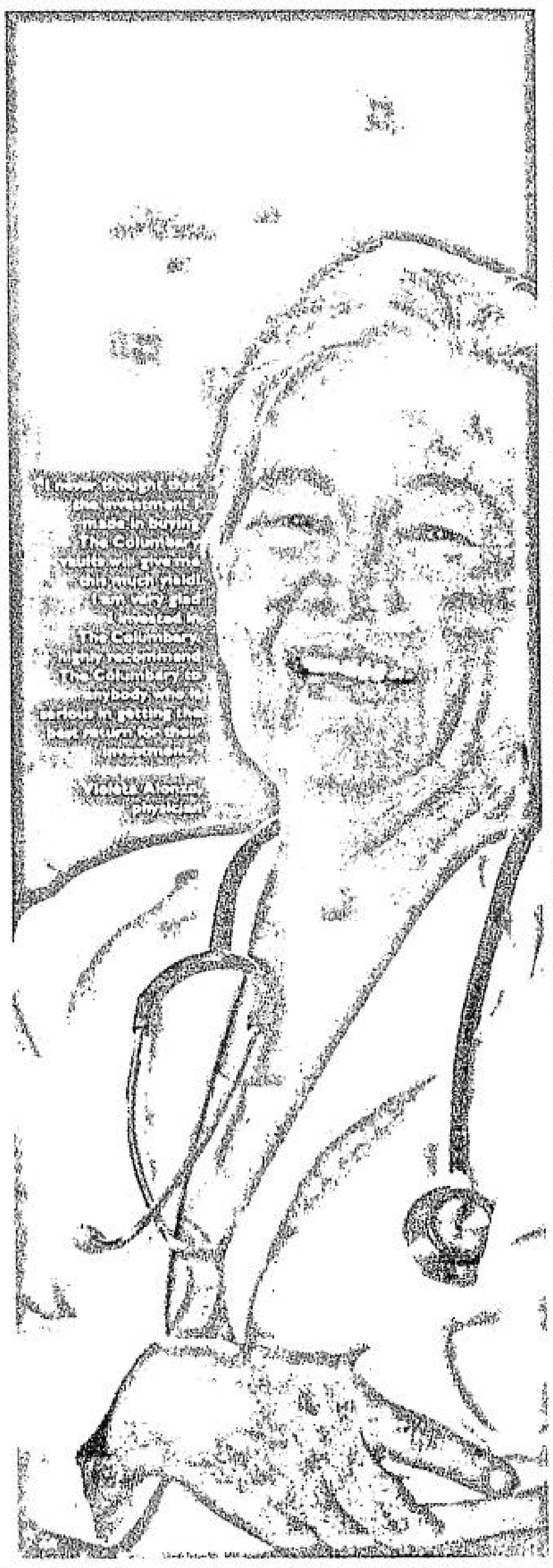

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5 Palestinians killed in fresh Gaza clashes

NUSAIRAT REFUGEE CAMP, Gaza—Israeli forces backed by helicopter gunships battled gunmen in Gaza refugee camps on Thursday after killing four Palestinians who the army said were on their way to attack Jewish settlements.

In a separate incident, police said they killed a Palestinian gunman who broke into a home in the Israeli village of Maor, five km from the West Bank. An Israeli couple in the house escaped when his assault rifle jammed.

The army said it sent infantry and armor, supported by assault helicopters, into the Nusairat, Bureij and Maghazi refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip as part of its "continuing battle against terrorism." The camps are considered strongholds of Palestinian militants waging a more than two-year-old uprising for independence.

Ambulance workers said several Palestinians were wounded before Israeli forces withdrew from Nusairat and Bureij after a two-hour night-time operation.

After daybreak, the army began an operation in Maghazi, sending in 10 tanks and armored personnel carriers and detaining several people, Palestinian security sources said.

The violence came amid US calls for Middle East calm to avoid jarring Washington's plans for possible war on Iraq.

Called to arms from mosque loudspeakers, gunmen flocked to the streets of Nusairat and Bureij and exchanged shots with Israeli troops on the outskirts of the camps, scattering occasionally under fire from helicopters overhead.

An Israeli tank damaged a food warehouse on the outskirts of Bureij. The army said it searched buildings used by the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The PFLP said soldiers blew up a gate to one of its offices and seized files.

In Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza, where Israeli forces regularly operate to uncover militant gunrunner tunnels from nearby Egypt, witnesses said bulldozers demolished 10 structures.

The army said it destroyed the buildings after gunmen inside had fired at soldiers. Two soldiers were wounded in the operation, it added.

In Maor, an agricultural community, a three-hour night-time standoff ended with the death of the gunman who had holed up in the house from which the Israeli couple had fled.

"After securing the building our counterterrorist unit made contact with the terrorist who was armed with an M-16 and still posing threat, and killed him," a police spokesperson said.

The owner of the home, Roland Mori, an immigrant from Switzerland, told reporters the gunman got off one wild shot before his rifle jammed.

PALESTINIAN children look through a hole of the destroyed wall of a mechanic's garage after it was destroyed by an Israeli tank at Bureij refugee camp southern Gaza Strip, Jan. 2. AP

"I shouted to my wife, in French, to flee and I immediately began to throw everything I found on the living table at the terrorist," Mori said.

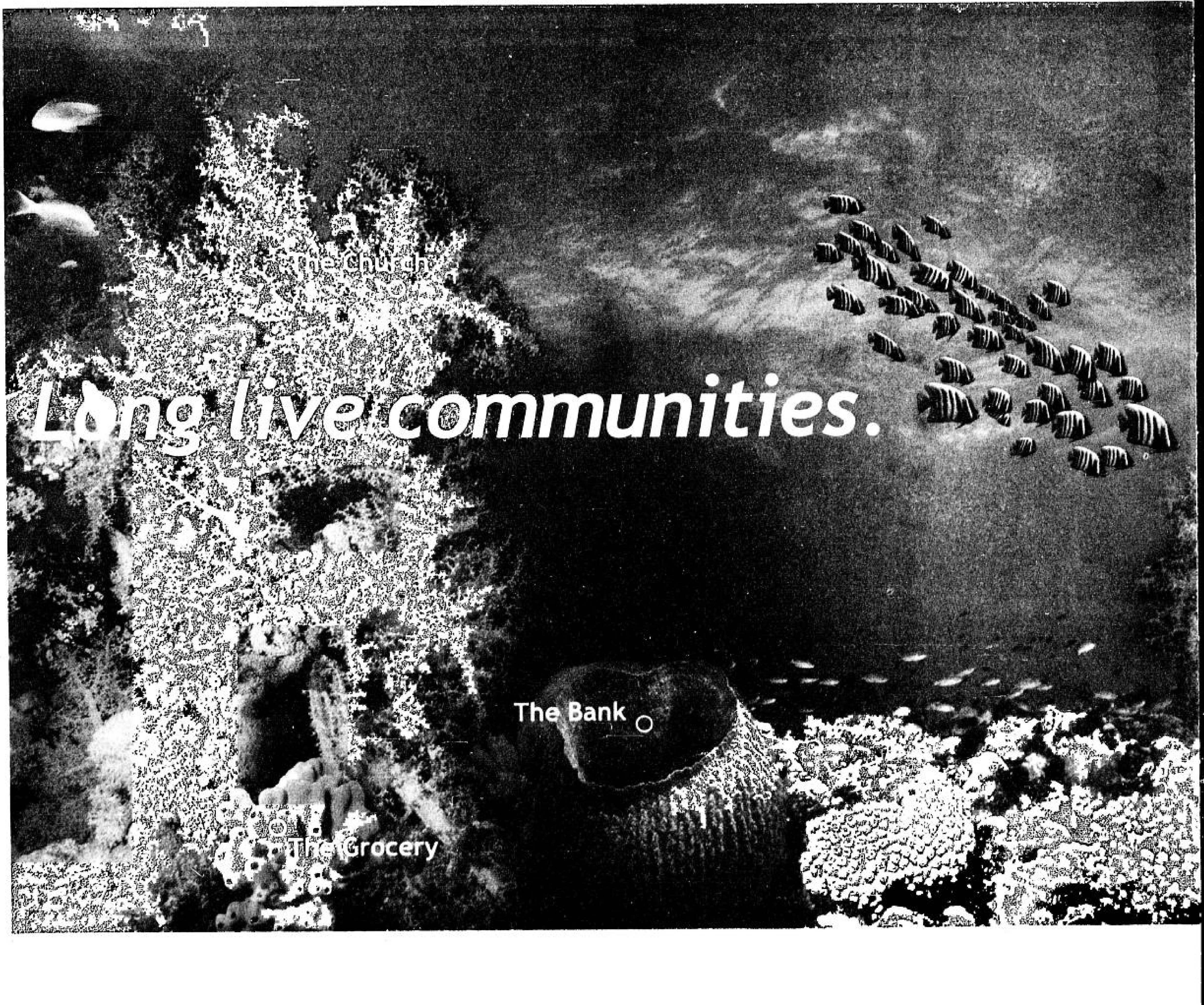
He said his spouse jumped out of a bedroom window and he ran out the front door, leaving the gunman inside.

There was no immediate reaction from Palestinian factions.

On Wednesday night, troops shot dead three Palestinian teenagers who the army said were trying to attack a Jewish settlement in northern Gaza. The army also said it killed a militant on his way to bomb a settlement in the West Bank.

A senior Israeli commander said the three poorly armed youths had been intercepted after climbing a security fence protecting the Elei Sinai settlement and heading towards it.

"They were dressed in dark civilian clothes and were advancing in a crouch, commando-style," said Colonel Ofer Shafran, based in the area. "We found two wire-cutters and a knife on their bodies." Palestinian security sources and the youths' relatives said the youths had apparently acted independently, as they had no known militant affiliations. *Reuters*



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Hunger, wars underreported in 2002, says group

NEW YORK—Starvation and disease in Angola and wars in Congo and Colombia were among the top 10 humanitarian stories underreported in the United States in 2002, the international medical group Medicins Sans Frontieres said Tuesday.

Scant attention also was paid to the severe food shortage in North Korea and to escalating violence in southern Sudan between the Islamic government and ethnic militias that has forced thousands to flee their homes, said the group, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.

This is the fifth year the Paris-based aid group, also known as Doctors Without Borders, has issued its annual list of news stories it claims have been largely ignored by the US media.

For the fourth year in a row, Doctors Without Borders included in its list the lack of access to medicines for diseases that kill millions of the world's poorest people. While the fight against AIDS is widely covered in the media, deaths caused by malaria, tuberculosis, the parasitic disease *kala azar* and sleeping sickness—all of which can be treated effectively—received little press attention, the report said.

"Tuberculosis rates are soaring to the point that, if left unchecked, 35 million people will die of the disease over the next decade," the group said, citing World Health Organization estimates.

And despite the fanfare over price cuts for AIDS drugs announced by pharmaceutical companies, the vast majority of the world's 42 million people with HIV have no access to any kind of treatment, the report said.

The humanitarian crisis emerging in Angola was probably the biggest emergency that Doctors Without Borders responded to this year, said Kris Torgeson, a spokesperson for the group.

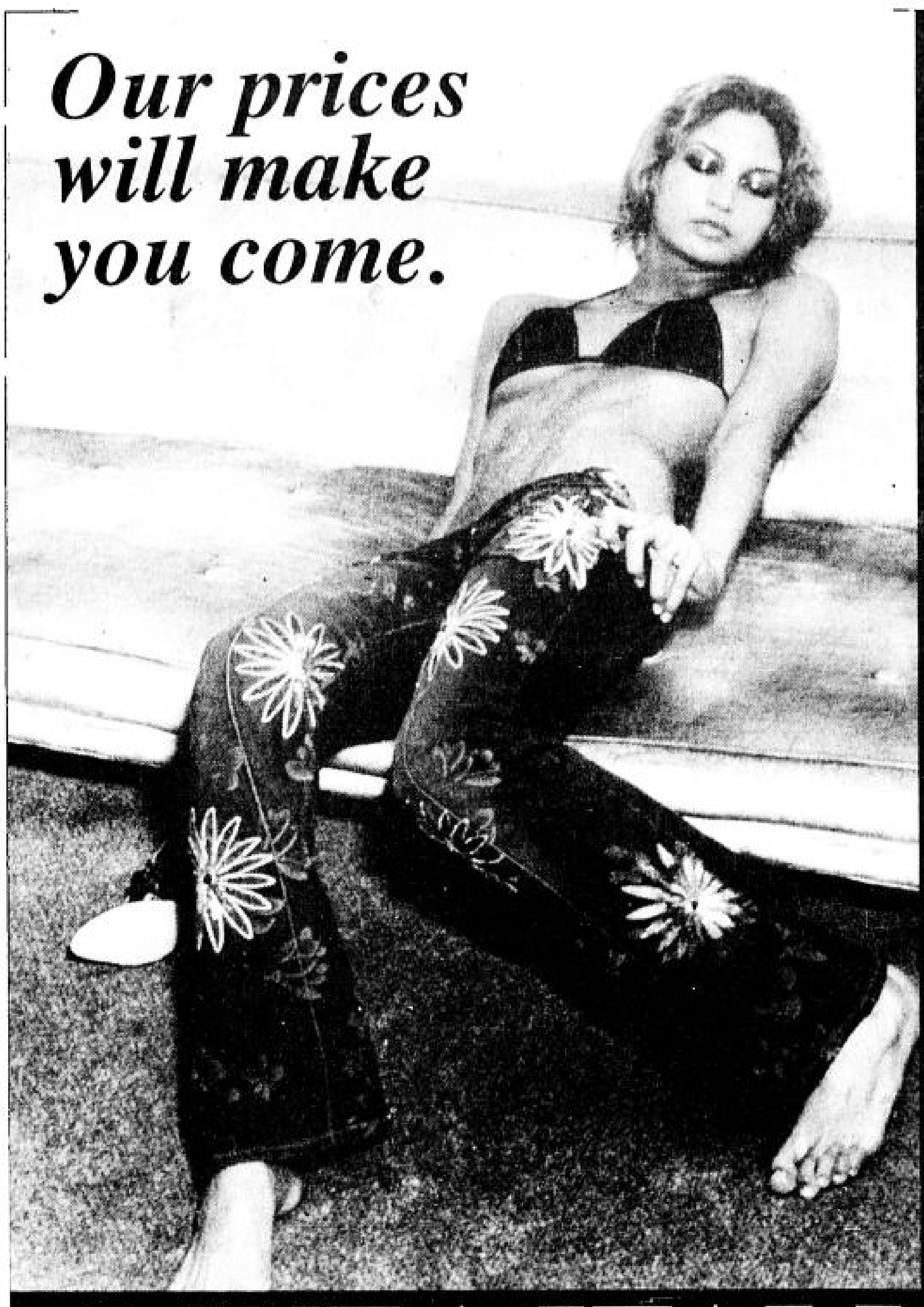
Although an April ceasefire ended the southern African nation's 27-year civil war between the government and UNITA rebels, 4 million people are displaced, and many are in desperate need of food and medical attention. The government has been largely indifferent to their plight, and the response of the international community has been slow, the group said.

"After the ceasefire was signed, the country opened up and we found severe pockets of malnutrition," Torgeson said.

In a May survey of a feeding center in the town of Malange, the group said it found that six out of 10 women had lost a child to hunger in the preceding four months.

Doctors Without Borders is providing medically monitored feeding to 20,000 severely malnourished people, primarily children, Torgeson said.

Two other stories included in the list for the fourth straight year were the humanitarian crises created by conflicts in Congo and Colombia. *AP*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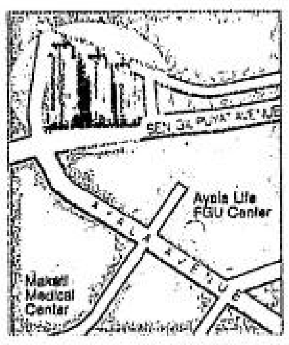

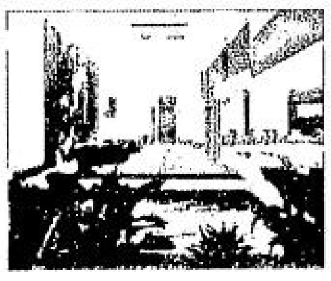

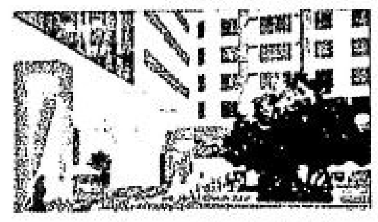

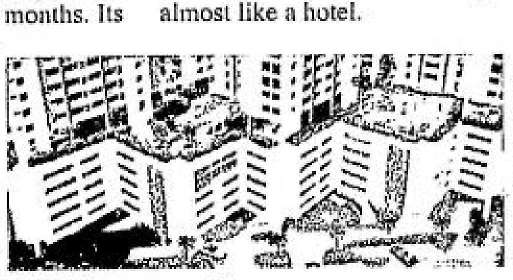

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AYALA AVENUE

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Al-Qaida seen increasing suicide terrorism

JAKARTA—The al-Qaida terror network and its associate groups will increasingly resort to suicide attacks against soft targets this year because of their diminished resources, an analyst said Thursday.

"Al-Qaida's intention to attack has not diminished but its capability to attack has suffered," said visiting Singapore-based terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna.

"As such, the group is increasingly probing targets that can be attacked with least effort and cost," he said.

Gunaratna, the author of "Inside al-Qaida: Global Network of Terror," said al-Qaida's preferred target would remain the United States but it would only have the capability to attack US allies.

"With al-Qaida working with like-minded groups, the attacks conducted by al-Qaida's associate groups will pose a threat as great as al-Qaida," Gunaratna said.

"Furthermore, assassination will be used more frequently although suicide bombings will be the most predominant form of attack."

Attacks would likely focus on economic targets and cities, he said, noting that al-Qaida or its associate groups had already killed German tourists in Tunisia, French naval technicians in Pakistan, Australians and Westerners in Indonesia's Bali island and Israelis in Kenya.

"Al-Qaida finds it less costly to operate in parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East where there is lack of security controls," Gunaratna said.

The Bali bombing killed more than 190 people, mostly foreigners. The Jemaah Islamiyah regional militant network, which has been linked to al-Qaida, is widely accused of responsibility for the attack.

Fifteen people have been arrested and 11 including two Malaysians are still sought over the blast.

The US war on terror will force Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida to decentralize further and rely on its global network of militant Islamic groups, Gunaratna said.

Al-Qaida will probably use non-sophisticated technology to attack civilians and civilian infrastructure but choose symbolic and prestigious targets for greater impact.

"With greater border controls, members and associate members of al-Qaida will use what can be readily purchased off the shelf especially from pharmacies, chemist shops and hardware stores," the Sri Lankan-born author said.

Gunaratna said that with the loss of Afghanistan as a "theater of jihad (holy struggle)," in the future terrorists entering the West would have been trained not only in Afghanistan but also in other places such as Chechnya.

He said al-Qaida would continue to conduct operations against Muslim rulers supporting the US-led "war on terror," including the Pakistani and Afghan leaderships.

A United Nations report released in December said al-Qaida remained a global threat to world peace and security despite major blows to its infrastructure. *AFP*

Brazil's first working-class president inaugurated

BRASILIA—Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a working class hero who never finished high school, on Wednesday became Brazil's president to a thumping samba beat and the cheers of thousands of fans.

In an emotional speech to the hundreds of thousands gathered to catch the historic moment, Lula, a former shoe-shine boy, vowed to work to wipe out the hunger, poverty and corruption he had battled as a child.

"Change is the key word," said Lula, swept into power as head of the largest country in Latin America with 61 percent of the vote.

"The time has come to transform Brazil into that nation we have always dreamed of being, a sovereign nation, dignified, conscious of the international arena while still capable of taking care sheltering and treating with justice all of its people," he said.

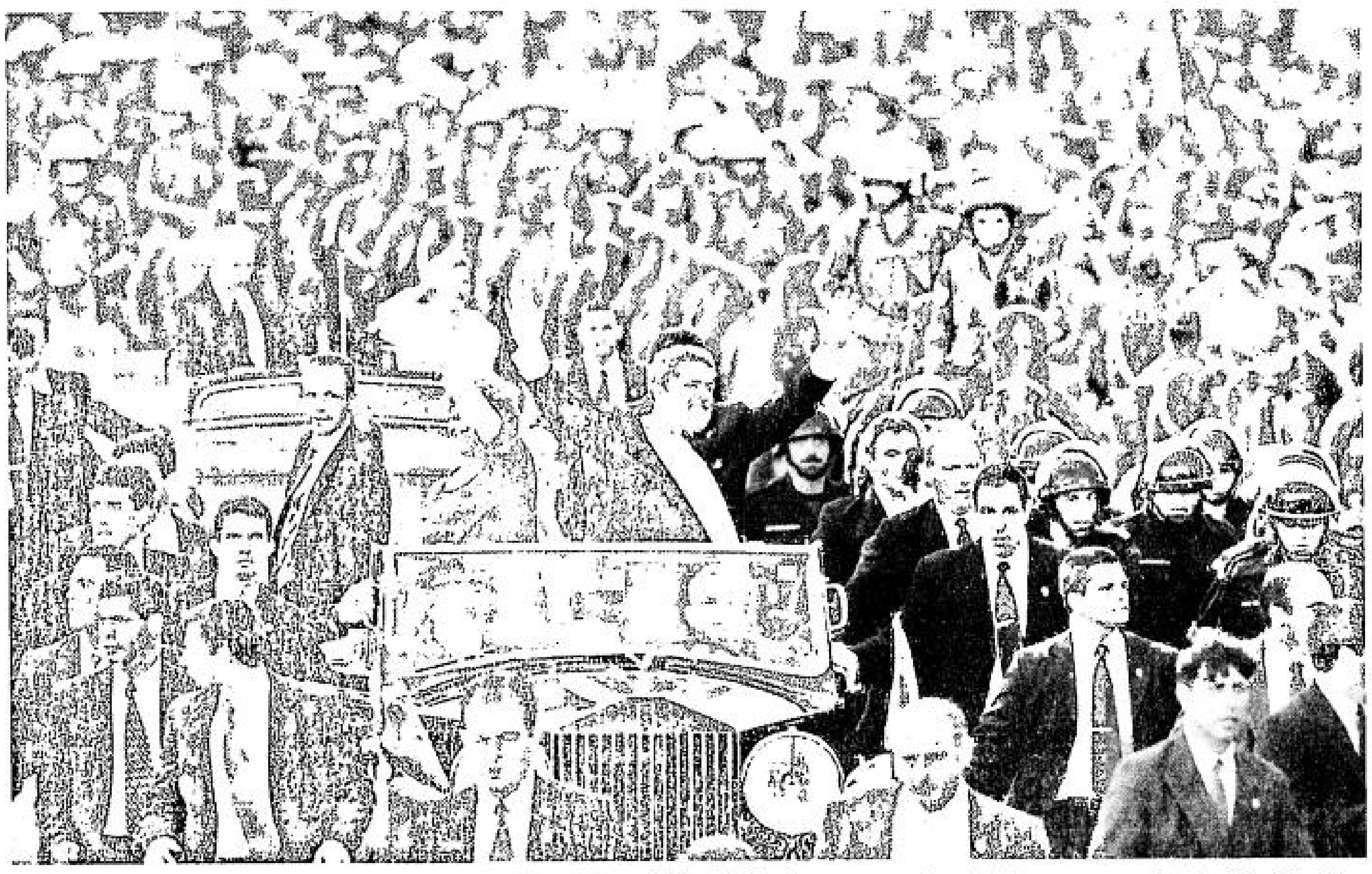
"Hope has finally conquered fear," he added, as cheers erupted across the square.

Lula and his vice president, conservative business leader Jose Alencar, took the oath of office at the National Congress.

Nine heads of state were in Brasilia for the event, including Cuban President Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

The United States sent Trade Representative Robert Zoellick to attend the ceremonies.

In his inaugural speech Lula set his top priorities as fighting hunger and corruption, placing Brazil back on the path of economic growth, and striving toward South American integration. *AFP*



BRAZILIAN President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, left, and his wife Marisa wave as they ride in an open car in Brasilia after the swearing-in ceremony Jan. 1. Silva, who dropped out of school as a boy to shine shoes and went on to become the leader of Brazil's leftist Workers Party, was inaugurated as the 36th president of Latin America's biggest nation. AP

Americans fatter now, says study

CHICAGO—Americans should look to their waistlines in the New Year.

That's the message from a study released Tuesday which finds that public health campaigns have done little to dent the inexorable rise in obesity and diabetes among Americans over the past decade.

Quite the contrary, in fact.

The percentage of obese Americans increased a whopping 74 percent between 1991 and 2001, according to a survey by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia.

Some 44 million adult Americans, or one fifth of the population (21 percent) are now defined as obese, and are at risk for a host of medical problems, including diabetes.

In a related trend, the prevalence of diabetes soared 61 percent between 1990 and 2001.

Almost eight percent of Americans over the age of 18 now suffer from the glucose-intolerance disease, according to the CDC's telephone survey of 195,000 Americans.

"These increases are disturbing and are likely even underestimated," said CDC Director Julie Gerberding, pointing to the tendency of people who are self-reporting to underestimate their weight, skewing the figures.

"What's more important, we're seeing a number of serious health effects resulting from overweight and obesity. If we continue on this same path, the results will be devastating to both the health of the nation and to our healthcare system."

With 300,000 Americans dying of obesity-related illnesses every year, "reversing the obesity epidemic is an urgent priority," the authors of the study wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The seriously overweight are seven times more likely to develop diabetes, six times more likely to develop high blood pressure and almost twice as likely to have high cholesterol levels as people of "average" weight. *AFP*

NEW YEAR ROSE

Rose Queen Alexandra Wucetich waves to the crowd during the 2003 Tournament of Roses Parade on Jan. 1, in Pasadena, California. AP

S. Korean, Chinese officials seek to defuse N. Korea crisis

BEIJING—South Korea held talks with North Korea's chief ally China on Thursday in the hope of defusing a showdown between the United States and the reclusive communist state over its drive to acquire nuclear weapons.

South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Tae-shik met Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi and was expected to urge China to put more pressure on isolated, impoverished North Korea to halt its weapons program.

"I think it will help improve the atmosphere to resolve this nuclear issue in a peaceful manner," one diplomatic source said of the talks after they ended.

"It is always good for the surrounding countries to discuss this issue. In that sense, I think it may have some influence on North Korea," he said without elaborating.

But North Korea kept the rhetorical fires burning, urging South Koreans to join in resisting the United States and accusing the United States of whipping up the confrontation.

"The US seeks to escalate military pressure and offensive against the DPRK (North Korea) on the charge of posing a nuclear and missile threat and, furthermore, bring it to its knees by force," the North Korea's official Minju Joson newspaper said.

North Korea has started reactivating a nuclear complex, mothballed since 1994, which is capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium and has expelled UN inspectors monitoring it.

China, which fought alongside the North during the 1950-53 Korean War, has so far balanced a call for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula with support for dialogue between the United States and North Korea to end the standoff.

Pyongyang is demanding direct talks with Washington and a non-aggression pact to defuse the crisis. Washington has rejected the idea, saying it will not reward bad behavior.

But US President George W. Bush, who has lumped North Korea with Iraq and Iran in an "axis of evil," said this week that Washington and Pyongyang were engaged in "a diplomatic showdown . . . not a military showdown." *Reuters*

Boeing, Hughes accused of giving rocket data to China

WASHINGTON—Two leading aerospace companies have been accused by the State Department of illegally providing satellite and rocket technology to China that could be used for intercontinental missiles.

The department accused Hughes Electronics Corp. and Boeing Satellite Systems of illegally giving technical data to China following failed Chinese launches of rockets carrying American satellites in 1995 and 1996. Boeing acquired Hughes' space unit in 2000.

In a letter dated Dec. 26, the State Department said the companies committed 123 violations of the Arms Control Export Act and the International Traffic in Arms Regulations.

If the violations are upheld through the department's administrative appeals procedures, the companies could face restrictions on selling technologies overseas. They also could face fines of $500,000 per charge, though it is not clear if each violation would constitute a separate violation.

"The number and substance of charges reflect the seriousness of the violations," Lou Fintor, a State Department spokesperson, said Wednesday. "There are many similarities between a space launch vehicle and an intercontinental ballistic missile."

A Hughes spokesperson, Richard Dore, said the company did nothing wrong.

"We did not do anything to assist the Chinese," he said.

Dore said the company complied with the regulations of the Commerce Department, which oversaw technology exports at the time. He said discussions with the State Department are continuing.

Dore also noted that a Justice Department investigation of the two companies and a third, Loral Space & Communications Ltd., did not result in any criminal charges.

Boeing spokesman Walt Rice said the company needs to review the State Department's accusations before commenting.

Loral reached a civil settlement with the State Department in January, agreeing to pay a $20 million fine, of which $6 million would be used to create procedures to ensure it wouldn't violate export rules in the future. *AP*

Help inching toward South Pacific islands 5 days after deadly cyclone

AUCKLAND—Five days after a powerful cyclone slammed into two isolated Polynesian islands the fate of nearly 3,000 people remained a mystery Thursday, as the South Pacific's rich nations faced growing criticism for their response to the disaster.

Cyclone Zoe pounded Tikopia and Anuta in the Solomon Islands on Saturday and although there has been no communication with them two surveillance flights Wednesday revealed massive damage.

Provincial Premier Gabriel Teao in the regional capital Lata on the island of Temoto said it was believed 11 meter-high waves had engulfed low lying areas of Tikopia.

"Whole villages have been buried and I am still not sure how many people are dead," an emotional Teao said.

Radio New Zealand said a Solomon's government patrol boat would Thursday night leave the capital Honiara on a three-day voyage for Tikopia.

A smaller island ferry, Isabella, is set to leave Friday. A second Royal Australia Air Force Hercules was en route for the island on a second survey mission following a first flight Wednesday.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff said Thursday that Canberra and Wellington were jointly funding Isabella.

An anthropologist who lived on Tikopia, Judith Macdonald, said the logistics of getting material off an unsuitable ship to the island, which has no harbor, would be impossible. The storm appears also to have filled the lagoon and destroyed the protecting reef.

One particular photo she said showed the area of Potu-i-Kafika, one of the main villages.

"They've gone and the channel to the lake has ripped wide open letting in sea water," she said.

Around 100 houses have disappeared.

"The worst thing is the layer of sand over everything which means salt contamination of crop land." *AFP*

AERIAL photo shows the devastated part of Tikopia Island in the Solomon Islands chain on Jan. 1, that bore the brunt of cyclone zoe on Dec. 28. AP

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LOOK WHO'S NOT RUNNING TOOTS SOBERANO

Thousands of these calendars, distributed in La Union during a visit of the President there on Dec. 28, may serve their purpose stuck on walls of households to remind people that Ms Macapagal was once President and maybe, just maybe, to serve as signs that the door has not been shut to her becoming President again.

PNP declares war, again, on 'jueteng'

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—The happy days are expected to be over for jueteng financiers who have resumed full-blast the illegal numbers game during the long Christmas and New Year holidays, Central Luzon's top police official warned on Thursday.

Chief Supt. Oscar Calderon, regional police director, ordered all provincial and city police directors to "intensify operations" against jueteng and other forms of illegal gambling.

"They have resumed their trade, taking advantage of the Yuletide season when our efforts are focused on the safe and secure celebration of the event," Calderon said in a memorandum here.

The renewed crackdown, Calderon stressed, "should result in the filing of criminal charges not only against *cabos* (area managers) and bet collectors, but also more particularly against the financiers and other violators."

The memorandum was Calderon's second effort to eliminate illegal gambling, specifically jueteng, in Central Luzon.

The first, launched last September and which attempted to make the region "100-percent jueteng-free," produced temporary successful results.

In just a few weeks, the illicit game had returned, starting out in Pampanga and Bulacan and eventually spreading to five other provinces and 11 cities in the region.

Police officials said they had anticipated the comeback. They said the reasons for this include the holidays, the lack of support from local governments in curbing jueteng and the police's problem of having only less than 8,000 personnel in the region.

Throughout 2002, the Central Luzon police reported conducting at least 1,428 raids on jueteng dens, most of which were in Bulacan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija and Tarlac.

They also arrested 4,472 jueteng employees, three of whom were financiers in Pampanga and Tarlac.

Bets worth P1.8 million were confiscated in the operations and were said to have been submitted to various courts as evidence in 1,362 cases filed for the violation of Presidential Decree 1602 or the anti-illegal gambling law.

In the country, illegal gambling remains a bailable offense and a P10,000 bail is a minor dent in the pockets of jueteng lords who still earn millions of pesos a month.

In Central Luzon, both financiers and small operators have learned to master the tricks of the trade, meaning cultivating complicity among local officials and policemen through bribe money.

"Some policemen accept bribe money from jueteng operators. The money is used to supplement the small budget for police operations," a source from the regional police's intelligence community said in an earlier interview with the INQUIRER.

The same source, a police official, said it was difficult to succeed in the anti-jueteng drive because local government officials also "tolerate" jueteng in their areas for their sources of dole-outs.

With no employment available, poor folk depend on bet collection, getting a mere 5 to 7 percent share of collections for such a risky job.

To date, various estimates say jueteng employs between 30,000 and 50,000 people in Central Luzon. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Moro rebs threaten to bomb Tawi-Tawi lotto outlet

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Islamic fundamentalists in Tawi-Tawi, including the Abu Sayyaf, have allegedly threatened to blow up the lotto outlet in the town of Bongao, the Tawi-Tawi capital.

Lilia Nuno, director of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) here, told the INQUIRER that the fundamentalists, except for the Tableeghs and the Masturas, have been constantly sending threats against the operation of the lotto.

"They kept on harassing us, especially our agent in the area. They said that if we are not going to close the outlet, they will (bomb) it," Nuno said.

Col. Ben Dolorfino, commander of the 2nd Marine Brigade, said the Abu Sayyaf has taken advantage of the threats against the lotto outlet.

Islamic fundamentalists in Bongao, he said, have claimed that the operation of the lotto outlet goes against the teachings of Islam.

Islam prohibits gambling but fundamentalists, he said, interpreted this to include government-sponsored charity drives, including lotto.

Dolorfino said he already dispatched the 1st Marine Battalion Landing Team under Col. Eugene Clemen to secure the outlet.

Nuno said the Bongao outlet has been operating for the past two months already.

"They claim it is *haram*. How could it be? It's legal. What they should (target) are the video *karera* and *loteng* operation in the area," she said.

Loteng is an illegal numbers game that draws its winning number combinations from the results of lotto.

Aside from Muslim fundamentalists, the Catholic Church in some parts of the country has also given the thumbs down sign to the operations of lotto, claiming that it encourages gambling among Filipinos. ***Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

₱100,000 reward offered for 5-yr-old girl killer

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Police officials here on Thursday offered a cash reward of P100,000 to any informant who could provide a correct lead to identify the gun owner responsible for the death of a five-year-old girl in Bulacan on New Year's Eve.

The girl, Joville Bondoc of Paombong town, died after a stray bullet hit her in the head.

Chief Supt. Oscar Calderon, Central Luzon police director, said informants could send text messages to 2920 or they can call (045) 961-2980 for any information leading to the identification and arrest of Bondoc's killer.

He said part of their investigation includes a gunpowder test on all firearms issued to policemen and licensed civilian gun owners in Paombong town.

Investigators are also establishing the identities of gun owners living near Barangay San Isidro, where Bondoc lived.

The police crime laboratory has yet to identify the type of bullet that hit the girl.

Bondoc was the first reported fatality from stray bullet during the New Year revelry in Central Luzon.

For the same offense, Calderon had earlier warned of summary dismissal for policemen and criminal charges for civilians.

In related developments, Bulacan policemen on Wednesday arrested Placido Malabanan, a security guard, for indiscriminate firing at the height of New Year revelries.

Malabanan was confirmed to have fired his .38 cal. revolver on Dec. 31.

In Pampanga, Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, provincial police director, began the summary dismissal proceedings on SPO4 Diosdado Bamba who fired his service firearm in front of the house of City of San Fernando Mayor Reynaldo Aquino on Dec. 28.

An initial investigation report showed that Bamba was drunk when he fired his gun.

Reports said Aquino's wife and children, who were in their house at St. Dominic Subdivision, panicked and cried when they heard the gunshots.

FEWER injuries were reported out of the use of firecrackers like these ones on sale in Bocaue, Bulacan hours before New Year's Eve but, like in the past, trigger-happy gun owners did the most damage. ERIC ARAZAS

In Olongapo City, a complaint for illegal use of firearms was filed against PO2 Angel Atos, a member of the police's Special Action Force and assigned to the anti-crime unit Pacer in Camp Crame, Quezon City.

Police reports said Atos turned over his .45 cal. pistol to the Olongapo police. He fired his gun twice during a heated argument with his mother-in-law on Dec. 26. Atos is detained at the Olongapo City jail. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Death convicts bolt Samar jail, kill lone guard

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—A jail guard was shot dead as seven death row inmates escaped from the provincial jail of Northern Samar in Bobon town at around 1:30 p.m. on the eve of New Year.

The seven prisoners, all death convicts placed under one cell, managed to escape by destroying their cell's steel bars with an improvised hacksaw, said Gen. Dionisio Coloma, regional chief of the Philippine National Police in Eastern Samar, quoting a report from Bobon police chief Insp. Joel Malaki.

Coloma also said one of the escapees, murder convict Rogelio Galicio, shot to death the jail's lone guard at that time, Jail Officer II Precioso Paredes. He was shot in the head, causing his instant death.

Galicio was later recaptured but the other escapees have remained at large.

The sketchy report from the Bobon police did not say how Galicio got hold of a gun. The report said the fleeing prisoners brought with them Paredes' service firearm, a shotgun.

Still at large, Coloma said, were rape convicts Cecelio Galicio, Joel Catomora, Wilfredo Delaba, Dondio de Guia and Romeo Netula; and murder convict Rodolfo Catamora.

The provincial jail is located in Barangay Dancalan, some 18 km from the municipality of Bobon, 10 km from the provincial capital of Catarman.

Coloma said it was a still unidentified civilian who informed the town police of the jailbreak. But by the time the team led by Malaki arrived at the jail, the prisoners were also gone.

Coloma said Galicio was captured by the pursuing team led by Malaki while resting in a forested area in Barangay Dancalan.

The PNP regional chief said that he directed the Bobon police chief to continue their manhunt operation against the escapees.

Grudge seen in slaying of village exec, wife, neighbor

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Tragedy struck a quiet islet off Bantayan Island, northern Cebu, a day before New Year's Eve.

A village official, his wife and a neighbor were killed while another was wounded late Monday in Barangay Hilangtagaan, an islet belonging to Sta. Fe town, Bantayan Island, Cebu.

Insp. Samson Cañete, Sta. Fe chief of police, identified the fatalities as Barangay Councilor Edgar Escaran, 38; his wife Sepura, 42; and neighbor Laureno Villabrille Jr., 26, all from Sitio Hinatas-an, Hilangtagaan, which is two and half nautical miles away from Sta. Fe town proper.

Cañete said the suspect Rogelio Escarlan, 40, a fisherman from the same islet, surrendered to the police. He also turned over his .45 caliber pistol.

He said the suspect, who was drunk, did not tell investigators what prompted him to kill the couple and a neighbor inside their house at about 5 p.m. on Monday.

Cañete said they would initiate the filing of multiple murder and frustrated murder charges against Escarlan.

Based on police investigation, the Escaran couple arrived from Barangay Kawit, Medellin town in mainland Cebu where they delivered fish.

Villabrille, a fisherman, went to Escaran's house just to get the payment for the fish he had sold to the couple.

While Edgar was busy counting the money for Villabrille, Escarlan arrived with a .45-caliber pistol in his hand.

Without uttering any word, Escarlan shot the councilor. Sepura tried to save her husband but she, too, was shot.

Villabrille tried to run outside the house but the suspect shot him in the chest, killing him on the spot.

Escarlan then walked out of the house and went home. Along the way, he saw Lurcines Batiancela. He pointed his gun at her and shot her in the stomach.

Neighbors rushed the couple to the Bantayan District Hospital but the doctors declared them dead on arrival.

Batiancela was brought to Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center in Cebu City.

Cañete said they recovered from the couple's house 14 bullet shells and a magazine for a .45-cal. pistol.

He said they have yet to determine the motive for the killing but the suspect's wife had told them that Escarlan bore a grudge against the barangay councilor.

Edgar reportedly tried to fence the area where Escarlan docked his fishing boats.

Cañete said Escarlan was also mad at Edgar because the barangay councilor warned him that he would expose his illegal fishing activities.

Escarlan, he said, was engaged in dynamite fishing.

Edong, Danding, Joma asked to join 'unity gov't'

From page A1

led National Democratic Front of Jose Ma. Sison, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front of Hashim Salamat to join a "unity government" where they will have a say in the administration until June 30, 2004.

He said these leaders can either join the Cabinet directly or nominate their representatives.

"If they or their representatives join the Cabinet, they will have a say in the policies of the government," De Venecia told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

Greatest period

If all this is achieved, the last 18 months of the Macapagal administration will be the "greatest period" of leadership, according to De Venecia.

De Venecia said the terms of the unity government would be discussed during the meeting of the ruling party Lakas-NUCD party on Jan. 8.

"We're reaching out to all major political parties, including groups of the Left, right and center and all outstanding elements of civil society to create a multi-party structure," the Speaker said.

"In the same way that we created the Sunshine coalition in the House, there will be a critical collaboration in the Senate and a coalition Cabinet," he said.

He said the idea was to "provide representation for the Left either in the Cabinet or in national agencies of government or a power-sharing arrangement in the House where they will be given committee chairmanships."

De Venecia said he had asked former NDF lawyer Romeo Capulong, who was in his house several days ago, to convey the message to Sison who is based in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

The Speaker said the draft of the final peace agreement with the NDF would be submitted to the Cabinet for approval during today's meeting.

DE VENECIA: Coalition Cabinet

COJUANGCO: SMC success

ANGARA: To stay in Senate

JOMA: Back-channel talks

SALAMAT: Also invited

Peace in a single stroke

He said that he had renewed ties with the MILF and that the final peace agreement with the secessionist group was also being worked out by the government peace negotiators for immediate signing.

"You sign the peace agreements and you immediately end 35 years of fighting. With this single stroke, you bring peace and order to the entire country," De Venecia said.

"Let's see what happens but we're moving forward because we are now completing the draft of the final peace agreement which will be approved by the Cabinet this week. It will be presented to the NDF as a basis for moving forward," he said.

He had been conducting back-channel talks with Sison and Luis Jalandoni in Utrecht.

De Venecia, who had proposed the unity government weeks before the President announced that she was not running in the 2004 presidential election, said there would be "critical collaboration" in the Senate to ensure the passage of critical administration measures.

"We are considering the possibility of a modus vivendi in the Senate to pass critical legislation," he said, adding that the terms of this would be "defined by the leaders of the Senate."

Exploration

Exactly how and who will be appointed to the "unity government" are still being ironed out, he said. "We are in a period of exploration and experimentation," the Speaker said.

He said he had met with Angara, LDP president, five times recently on the unity government. "We're inviting the LDP, the leading opposition party in the country, to be a co-founder of the unity government," De Venecia said.

The LDP pulled out at the last minute from the political summit of all political parties held in May last year, saying it did not want to be co-opted by the administration to prop up its waning popularity.

He said Angara was all for it as well as the leaders of NPC, the second biggest party in the House.

But Angara yesterday denied reports that he had been offered a Cabinet post and was about to make a political crossover from the Senate to the executive branch.

He issued the clarification due to persistent reports that he would soon leave the Senate. "People voted me to the Senate and this is where I will serve," said Angara.

"On areas that can move the country and end the gridlock and paralysis in meaningful legislation, the LDP will fully cooperate and join a multi-party effort to pass important pieces of legislation," he said.

Danding a big help

De Venecia said he had not spoken personally with Cojuangco but to his right-hand man in San Miguel Corp., Ramon Ang, his nephew Tarlac Rep. Gilbert Teodoro, House Senior Deputy Leader Francis Escudero and other NPC leaders.

"They like the principle," he said.

The NPC, which has nearly 70 members in the House, provided a big chunk of votes for De Venecia in the speakership fight. Less than 30 of the 214 House members voted against him.

The Speaker said he had proposed to the NPC to "extend our coalition from the House to the Cabinet."

He said if Cojuangco agreed to his proposal, he could join the Cabinet. "The way they (Cojuangco and Ang) turned San Miguel around, they will be a big help" in crafting economic policies.

"In fairness to Danding Cojuangco, even during the term of President Ramos, he did not ask for anything," De Venecia said.

He said Estrada called him up on the afternoon of Christmas Day, which was also De Venecia's birthday. "We had a long talk and he's supportive of a national reconciliation," he said.

Based on justice

Asked what concessions the government was prepared to give Estrada, he said that reconciliation would be "based on justice."

Administration personalities are seeking a house arrest for Estrada before the Christmas holidays.

Asked if Estrada's Partido ng Masang Pilipino would also be invited to the Cabinet, the Speaker said: "All these things are possibilities that we should consider."

"Our approach must be inclusive, not exclusive," he said. De Venecia said he had sent "exploratory" feelers to religious leaders as well. *With a report from Cynthia D. Balana*

LDP sets meet to discuss offer

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE LABAN ng Demokratikong Pilipino will convene in the next few days to discuss the Macapagal administration's offer for the opposition to join the so-called government of national unity, Minority Leader Carlos Padilla said yesterday.

Padilla disclosed that Sen. Edgardo Angara and President Macapagal-Arroyo had met a few days before her Dec. 30 announcement that she was not running in 2004, and that the Chief Executive had sought the LDP president's support for the formation of the coalition government.

The two officials met in a residence of a common friend. Padilla said that the President did not tell Angara about her plan to announce that she was pulling out of the 2004 presidential race. The President, Padilla said, sought Angara's advice and support for the coalition government.

At that time, Padilla said Angara was "noncommittal and not too keen" about the proposal for the creation of a government of national unity.

But he said the LDP president, who is abroad and whom he talked to yesterday, was "not averse to the idea now that the political landscape has changed."

Padilla, however, stressed that Angara and party members like him would like to know first the agenda and terms of such proposal before making any commitments.

"Because it's not clear to us," Padilla told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"(Angara) is not averse to it because even before, the Senate opposition has been supportive of pieces of legislation being pushed by the administration," he also said

But the minority leader said the opposition definitely did not want the coalition government to be set up in preparation for the 2004 elections.

"There should be no politics here," Padilla said. "We believe that whatever terms to be spelled out should not go beyond 2004."

He said the party did not want the postponement of the 2004 elections due to the formation of the coalition government.

Padilla said the LDP would convene when Angara returned to Manila before Congress resumes its session on Jan. 13.

Padilla also said that during a phone conversation with Angara yesterday, the senator also told him he was not inclined to accept any Cabinet position to be offered to him if ever in the coalition government.

GMA billboards going down

NOW that President Macapagal-Arroyo has walked away from a chance at another term, have we seen the last of the "GMA Cares" billboards?

Malacañang yesterday virtually admitted that some government projects may have been aimed more at shoring up the President's popularity than serving the public.

Now that she has declared herself out of the 2004 presidential race, Ms Macapagal wants her Cabinet to do away with such gimmickry.

During a day-long "workshop" in Malacañang yesterday, Cabinet officials reportedly reassessed their departments' programs "without concern for politicking."

"We want to find out if subliminally some of these (programs) were made because of the belief that this administration has to be popular for the President to run in 2004," said Presidential Spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao.

He cited the use of the President's initials, GMA, in most public service programs.

"It may not be necessary and may be ill-advised," Tiglao said.

A few months ago, the Gabay ng Mamamayan Aksyon Centers, or GMA Centers, were set up in every barangay.

They were supposed to serve as public reading centers for materials from government agencies.

The Department of Public Works and Highways has also set up billboards in every major infrastructure project proclaiming "GMA Cares" and carrying her photograph. *Dona Pazzibugan*

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Perez quits; Jimenez claims victory

From page A1

Escueta said the resignation would not exculpate Perez from the charges that Jimenez had raised against him. "Mr. Jimenez though he's in the US right now and notwithstanding the resignation of Mr. Perez remains as resolute as ever to see through the cases of plunder, extortion and obstruction of justice that he has filed against the resigned justice secretary," Escueta said.

Baseless charges

In his letter, Perez said he was resigning "despite the fact that the charges hurled against me are false and baseless."

He said he wanted to spare himself and the President of "undue stress" caused by the allegations against him. "Recent turn of events has unfairly subjected this administration and myself to undue stress which may put in danger all the gains this government has achieved.

"And this I will not allow," he said.

Perez reminded Ms Macapagal of all that he had done to help her administration, namely, charging with rebellion those allegedly behind the May 1, 2001 Palace siege; prosecuting deposed President Joseph Estrada, former ARMM Gov. Nur Misuari, Dante Tan, and "numerous drug dealers, kidnappers and other criminals."

Extraditing Jimenez to the United States; reviving the Kuratong Baleleng murder case against Sen. Panfilo Lacson; prosecuting the alleged killers of Bubby Dacer; and pursuing the investigation of the Nida Blanca murder case.

Perez said that during his term, the Department of Justice "show(ed) that no one is above the law no matter how powerful or rich he may be."

"To the dark forces who have conspired with criminals against me, the truth will someday be known; your greed for power far exceeds your sense of national duty," he ended.

Tired

Perez's chief of staff Pam Escobar said last night that his decision to finally relinquish his post was partly influenced by Ms Macapagal's decision not to run for president in 2004.

So taking a cue from the President, "he decided to let go" of his post said Escobar, who had talked with Perez over the phone.

"It's about sacrifice. ... as exemplified by the President)."

Escobar said Perez told her "it was the best for him to leave."

"He told me ... *di na nya kaya,*" said Escobar , adding that Perez was "already tired (of the intrigues)." But she said "it's not about giving up (the fight)."

Perez told Escobar that he would try to convince the next justice secretary to retain some, if not all, of his staff members. "We're hoping, but you know a new secretary will bring in his own people," Escobar said.

Ms Macapagal ordered Perez to go on a 30-day leave a day after Jimenez accused him of extortion in a privileged speech on Nov. 25.

Perez was ready to resume his post on Dec. 27, a day after Jimenez left for the United States without showing new documentary evidence to back up his allegation against the justice secretary. But the President extended his leave by another "two to four weeks," supposedly upon Perez's own request.

Perez is the fourth official to leave the Cabinet.

In November, the President removed Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez and Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor. Last month, Ms Macapagal sacked Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas.

Cabinet revamp

Ms Macapagal announced on Dec. 30 that she would make a major policy speech on Jan. 6 in which she is expected to announce major reforms and more Cabinet changes.

Opposition Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta yesterday urged Ms Macapagal not to put off the Cabinet makeover, saying a reshuffle was needed at this crucial period of the administration.

Oreta said the President could not afford to give a second chance to Cabinet members who have bungled their jobs and eroded public confidence in her government.

"The President has to reconsider her plan to postpone a much-needed Cabinet revamp because she has to have a new team that can help her pursue what the Palace has termed as a 'paradigm shift' in her administration over the next year-and-a-half," the senator said.

Oreta said the shift would require new blood and creative minds to help the President accomplish swiftly her vow to stimulate the economy and create more jobs, heal the divided nation, and push clean and honest elections in 2004.

A Cabinet revamp will complement the President's decision not run for president in 2004, according to Oreta. *With a report from Cynthia D. Balana*

MJ told: Only 'clean money' accepted here

From page A1

Gutierrez said yesterday that Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez had yet to meet the bond conditions set by the Florida court.

"I don't know whether it would be difficult for him to raise (that amount)," she said, adding that she had no idea if Jimenez was still in custody.

But she said she had been told by James Nixon, the US Embassy legal attaché, that Jimenez's lawyers had yet to "produce" the bond.

"When you post that amount, you have to disclose the source. I'm not really familiar but I was just told [by Nixon] that when you put up that amount of bond, then you will have to disclose where you got the funds," she said.

Gutierrez would not say whether the delay may have to do with Jimenez's apprehension that putting up the bail bond could lead to a scrutiny of all his bank accounts.

"I really don't know whether they [US authorities] will go into that," she said.

Gutierrez pointed out that the conditions of the bail granted to Jimenez were similar to that granted fugitive Charlie "Atong" Ang, who is fighting extradition to the Philippines at a Las Vegas federal district court.

"It's just like in the Atong Ang case. He was asked to present proof that it's clean money and acquired from legitimate sources," Gutierrez said.

There have been allegations that Jimenez, whose computer business in the United States had expanded to some Latin American countries, may have had some links with the Colombia drug cartel.

"But I think that, within the week, he will be able to make it," said Gutierrez.

Once Jimenez produced the bond, he would be placed under house arrest, she said.

Just like Ang, Jimenez will be fitted with an electronic bracelet to prevent him from leaving Florida while he fights charges of 47 counts of tax evasion, wire fraud and illegal campaign contributions to the Democratic Party in the US courts.

The next hearing is scheduled for February.

Amending extradition law

Back home, Jimenez's congressional colleagues have begun moves to amend Presidential Decree 69, or the Philippine Extradition Law, so as to allow all Filipinos facing extradition in different countries to post bail for their temporary liberty.

"There's really a need to review our extradition law so that it will be more protective of the rights of our citizens," said Negros Occidental Rep. Apolinario Lozada Jr., the chair of the House committee on foreign relations which is conducting hearings on the extradition treaty arising from Jimenez's case.

"With the developments (in the Jimenez case), it is time we amended the law," he said.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay and Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama, who traveled to Miami to support Jimenez, are also seeking a review of the RP-US Extradition Treaty.

Lozada said the decision of the US court "put to shame" the Philippines' own judiciary.

A Supreme Court ruling denying bail to Jimenez paved the way for the controversial legislator's extradition to the United States.

The Extradition Law is the mother law on which extradition treaties with other countries are based.

Lozada said the country's extradition treaty with the United States conformed to this law which basically denies someone undergoing extradition proceedings the right to bail.

Once the law is amended, all the government has to do is to issue a "readjustment notification" to the United States, Lozada said.

He said the Philippines had patterned its extradition law after that of the United States.

UN model

"We should have used the United Nations model of extradition which allows bail and upholds the right of the states to protect their citizens," Lozada said.

Gutierrez who said the high-tech bracelet that Jimenez will be wearing cannot be surgically removed.

She said the electronic monitoring system aimed at "decongesting prisons" in the United States was very expensive.

With the bracelet, there was no need for a US marshal to guard Jimenez.

"He can only move around a specific area. If he goes outside the area, the office monitoring his office would know," Gutierrez said.

She said the length of Jimenez's stay in the United States depended on three things: if he is acquitted, if he has to serve a sentence and if he resorts to a plea bargain.

Prosecutors have said the most serious of the charges—fraud and tax evasion—could result in a prison term of 10 to 12 years.

Can Ramos run again? Debate rages

From page A1

elected president, from seeking reelection in 2004.

"The Constitution is very clear. No president shall be eligible for any reelection,'" Chavez said when sought for comment on the eligibility of Ramos running again next year.

"The Constitution is barking at him: once is enough," he said.

The Constitution does not make any distinction on this, so it is quite clear that once an elected President had served his term, the bar on him running again stays, according to Chavez. "When the Constitution and the law do not make any distinction, we should not make any distinction," he said.

2 schools of thought

Senate President Franklin Drilon said it was "ultimately up to the Supreme Court" to rule on whether the tobacco-chomping former President could be allowed to run anew as Lakas standard-bearer.

"There are two schools of thought on that. This is a novel issue [for the Supreme Court to resolve]," Drilon said at a press conference.

He said one "school of thought says that, after serving one term, a person is perpetually disqualified from running again for the position of president."

"There are others who say that as long as there is a gap in the term, meaning that after having served one full term and the president allows one term to expire, then he or she can again run for reelection," Drilon said.

Chavez said President Macapagal-Arroyo was not disqualified from running again because she was not elected.

"[But] as long as she keeps faithful to her word, I think she has found a niche in history," he said referring to her statement that she would not run in 2004.

Administration Sen. Francis Pangilinan also said he believed that Ramos is no longer eligible to run for a second term.

"Those entertaining the idea of a reelection for Ramos are just wasting their time as the Constitution expressly bars him from seeking reelection," Pangilinan told the INQUIRER.

Drilon is proposing that either Lakas or Ramos file a petition for declaratory relief with the Supreme Court to define whether he is still eligible to run for another term.

He said Lakas or Ramos "need not wait for the former President to file his certificate of candidacy before (any of them) can file a petition for declaratory relief."

"Under our legal system, (the petition) can be filed to determine one's rights under any law or contract. So that is a relief available to the former President," Drilon said.

DOJ: No comment

The Department of Justice refused to be embroiled in the debate. Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas N. Gutierrez said it was improper for her at this point to issue a legal opinion on the matter.

Taking a cue from Ms Macapagal, Gutierrez said government officials should stop talking politics, and instead concentrate on how to address the problems plaguing the country.

"It's the President's wish [for us to stop politicking]. That's the reason why there was that announcement [that she would not run in 2004]," said Gutierrez. "She wants to [concentrate] on her agenda."

Gutierrez said the justice department, which can render legal opinions on certain legal queries, "would rather leave that issue" open-ended.

"I think she will be announcing her candidate on Dec. 2003," said the acting secretary who attended the Cabinet meeting at the Palace yesterday. *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*

Some Lakas men . . .

From page A1

meeting scheduled for Jan. 8 during which President Macapagal-Arroyo was expected to discuss the implications of her decision not to run in 2004.

Nograles said he was supporting Roco also because of legal questions about former President Fidel V. Ramos seeking another term. *(See story on Page A1).*

"There is an absolute legal impediment for FVR to run for another election. Lakas must look for another candidate," said Nograles, Lakas chair for Davao City and party whip for Region 11.

"A Roco-Loren [Legarda] ticket looms as the strongest that Lakas can field," he said.

For Roco to be chosen as the Lakas standard-bearer he "must mend fences with so many Lakas leaders" immediately, Nograles said.

Abad grudgingly admitted that "if you go by the surveys, it's obviously Roco" who should be chosen by the ruling coalition.

"I haven't consulted my party mates but we are not close to his candidacy because he comes from the PPC and looking at options available in the political terrain, he is certainly the one most acceptable to us," Abad said.

He said the President's decision not to run in 2004 was a big blow to the opposition because it "lost its favorite whipping girl." Before Ms Macapagal's announcement on Dec. 30, the opposition hoped for a divided PPC, with the President and Roco expected to come to a head-to-head battle for nomination.

"But with GMA now out of the race, Roco is left as the only major contender," he said.

Roco's brother said "I don't know if there are overtures (for Roco to join Lakas) but from what I hear, he could be a candidate of Lakas," Representative Roco said he and his brother would prefer retaining their Aksyon Demokratiko party and the PPC.

At the Jan. 8 meeting with the President there might be a consensus on the possible candidates or a decision on Charter change, according to Zubiri.

'Silent Reform' man blasts PCSO head

From page A1

Curiously, instead of accusing De Leon of wasting the PCSO's money, Alcuaz faulted her for allowing the money of the state-run corporation to "rot" in the banks instead of using it.

"I am willing to turn state witness. This is my way of helping President Macapagal-Arroyo to accomplish her program of good governance," said Alcuaz who launched the Silent Reform movement with its trademark question mark stickers over the holidays.

De Leon commented that Alcuaz did not know what he was talking about.

"It's all in his mind," she said.

"I don't know why he's doing this. Maybe he has a personal agenda. But his claims don't hold water," she said.

Presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao had a likely explanation. He said Alcuaz was simply after the post of PCSO general manager.

He said Alcuaz asked him sometime before Christmas to ask the President to appoint him PCSO general manager as he needed the income.

ALCUAZ: She allowed money to rot in the bank.

But the President turned down the request, he said.

"We spoke for about two hours. He said he wants to be GM. Or if he can't be GM, he could just help in the media outside (the PCSO) while his wife could be appointed in his place," Tiglao said.

According to Tiglao, whom Alcuaz has accused of wanting him out of the PCSO, Alcuaz had said he could not afford to lose the PCSO job.

"I was surprised because I know they are a family of means," Tiglao told Palace reporters.

Alcuaz is a second cousin of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Whether Alcuaz would lose his job because of his exposé, Tiglao said "that's the least of the President's priorities. I suppose we'll study it."

He said he regretted Alcuaz's allegations but was confident De Leon was more than capable of defending herself.

Forgetting the past

In his press conference yesterday, Alcuaz hit out at Tiglao for allegedly warning him to stop hitting at the government as he himself was a government official.

"Bobi Tiglao has chosen to forget his past. While he has forgotten his past, he cannot make me forget mine," he said.

Tiglao is known as a former left-leaning activist during the anti-Marcos movement.

"They say I'm a loose canon. I say I am not a loose cunon but I am on a loose caisson, which is this government," Alcuaz said.

Alcuaz accused De Leon of allegedly going ahead with PCSO projects even without public bidding.

He said she allegedly tried to railroad a board resolution over the holidays to approve contracting the services of two firms, the Creative Games Inc. as ticket supplier and Interactive Promotional Concept as distributor.

DE LEON: Nothing wrong with money in the bank.

De Leon had allegedly asked for a 3 p.m. board meeting Dec. 23 at the PCSO but failed because of a late notification.

She then allegedly tried to get the board members together over a pre-Christmas dinner at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

"I objected to the meeting," Alcuaz said.

He said even with the huge budget deficit, the PCSO continues to have money "rotting" in the bank.

He said cash reserves now amounted to more than P1 billion. He said the money had been earlier earmarked for an ambulance project, the rehabilitation of the PNP Hospital, and the construction of a hospital for indigents which was to have been named the Ospital ni Erap.

"It is not our mandate to have money earn interest in the bank," he said.

De Leon said that contrary to Alcuaz's claims, there was nothing wrong with putting PCSO funds on hold in the banks.

"It's the mandate of a government corporation to make money for the government. At the PCSO, we do it through the lottery. But there is also what we call non-operating income which is gained by allowing funds to earn interest in the banks," she said.

"It is also a way for us to maintain our resources for our beneficiaries which are the indigent communities needing health-related and other kinds of assistance," she said.

Deficits

Cirilo Avila, a former PCSO secretary who was at the Alcuaz press conference, claimed on the other hand that the probable reason for shelving the ambulance and hospital projects was because the PCSO may no longer have any money.

Avila, who was sacked last August, claimed that the PCSO had incurred billion-peso deficits in its operational fund, unpaid prize fund and charity fund.

He said he was fired when he cited the alleged irregularities.

Avila said the PCSO's operational fund has a deficit of P1.25 billion while the unpaid prize fund has a deficit of P1.27 billion and the charity fund P1.4 billion.

"They overspent, particularly the operational fund," he alleged, noting the allegedly huge public relations fund amounting to P250 million in 2001.

He claimed that De Leon collects a P3,000 daily allowance as an observer in the lotto draws.

"She gets to collect even if she doesn't attend any of them," Avila said. *With reports from Dona Pazzibugan and Agnes E. Donato*

GMA admired, applauded at Mass for unity

From page A1

Ms Aquino.

Sotto also lauded the President's decision to back out of the presidential race.

"Our pursuit of peace and unity needs three keys—prayer, heroic selflessness and strength of will. The President sought the guidance of God and not politicians in declaring her decision not to run in 2004," Villegas said in his homily.

Villegas, who is also the spokesperson of Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, said that with unity, the poor can be better served, the youth educated, the problem of corruption eliminated and "laws can be more speedily passed and implemented."

'Outdated ideologues'

In a written reply to questions from reporters, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines president Archbishop Orlando Quevedo decried the "tragic malaise that has made government the helpless pawn of 'too much politics.'"

He said the President's decision not to run for an elective term next year confirms the fact that "politics in our country has become the art of national self-destruction because of confrontational political disunity, gridlock in the Senate, self-serving political interest placed over the national good," among other things.

"Political oppositionists and outdated ideologues were always assailing, even for petty reasons, her competence and integrity," he said. "I concluded that the GMA government was 'not allowed to succeed.'"

He said the President's "loss to political life" shows the "crying need of our country for political vision, competence, integrity, and the ability to unite various factions" that are "destructively hypercritical and divisive."

"We must expect other political leaders to follow her example of self-sacrifice when it is for the common good of all. We must expect possible candidates for electoral office to examine themselves in the light of the needs of the country," he said.

Apparently taking potshots at opposition plans to field actor Fernando Poe Jr. as presidential candidate, Quevedo said that from the "moral point of view, "winnability" must not be taken as a "criterion for candidacy."

Armand Nocum

THE RESPONSE of a grateful Catholic Church to the President's "sacrifice" is conveyed by Manila Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas who welcomes her to the Edsa Shrine on Thursday. Behind the President is Dodi Limcaoco, presidential adviser on ecclesiastical affairs.

VAL HANDUMON

If FVR runs . . .

From page A1

Remulla yesterday said.

Remulla said he was confident that in a Ramos-Estrada contest, the latter would beat the daylights out of Ramos. And never mind if Estrada is facing a plunder case at the Sandiganbayan.

In a statement, Remulla acknowledged that "prevailing interpretations" of the term limits set for the presidency under the Constitution remain the subject of debate. *(Story on Page A1)*

He said surveys still show that Estrada had a "wide base of support" in the country and could easily count "10 million hardline supporters" going to his side.

"It will be like a death wish for him," Remulla said. "He would be met with a lot of issues, not just by the Estrada camp but by people crossing party lines, and the Lakas people know this."

What about anomalies?

Remulla also said that Ramos had yet to be held accountable for several irregularities that happened during his administration. These included the Clark Centennial Expo, the Public Estate Authority-Amari reclamation project; the proceeds from the sale of Villamor and Fort Bonifacio intended for the modernization of the Armed Forces still unaccounted for to this day; the contracts of independent power producers that ushered in the purchased power adjustment (PPA) charges in the electric bill of consumers.

These alleged anomalous projects "whose effects we feel today," said Remulla, will rise like zombies to haunt Ramos.

House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla likewise said if Ramos ran again, it would be a "good opportunity" for the opposition to raise questions on several issues that hounded his administration.

Bayan Muna Rep. Crispin Beltran raised more issues against Ramos.

Oil, water crises

"Contrary to his supporters' claims, Ramos is responsible for the severe decline in the national economy. The destructive effects of his 'Philippines 2000' or the Medium-Term Philippines Development Plan (MTPDP) are still being felt up to now," he said.

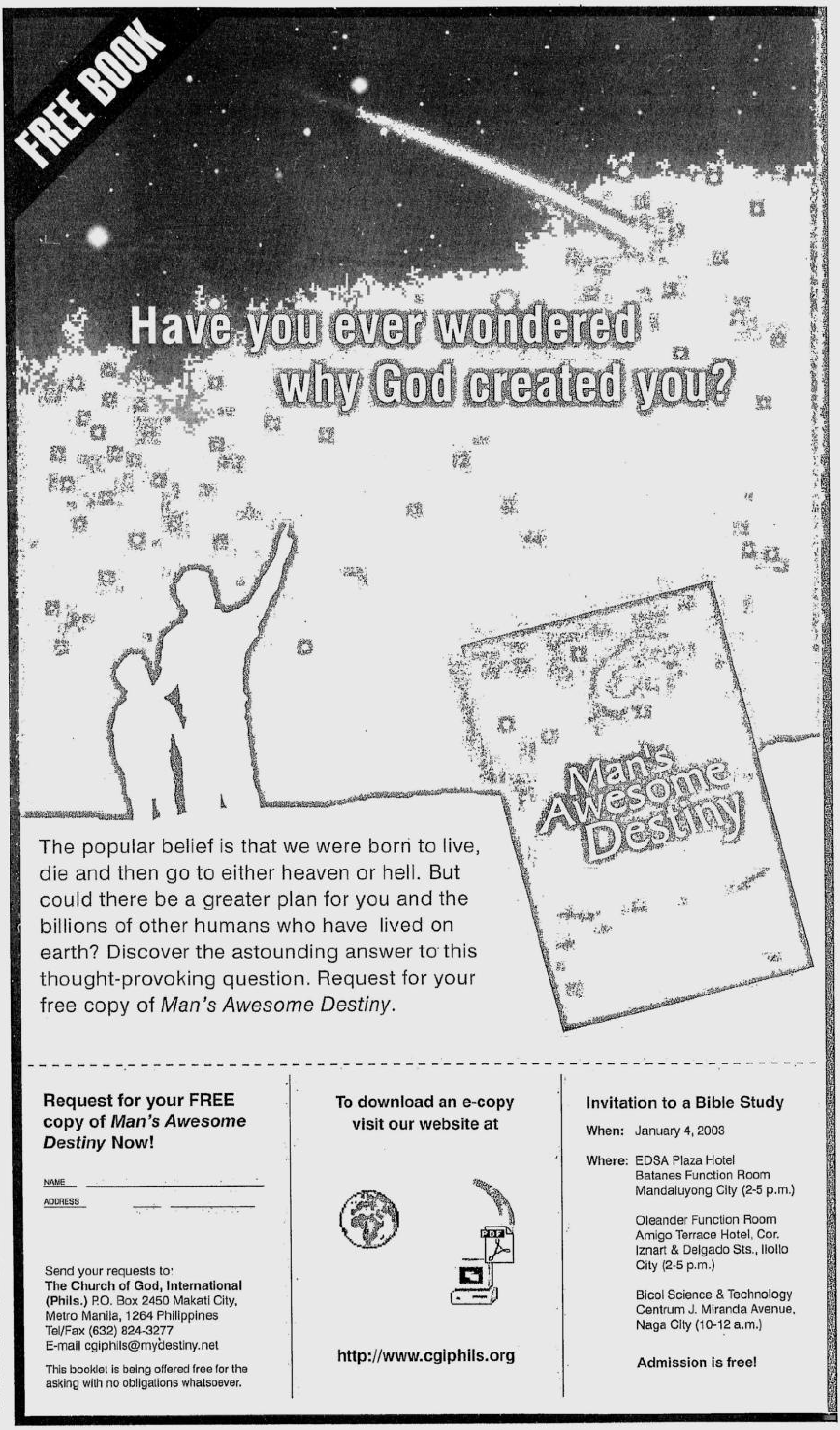
He explained that Ramos' policies of privatization, deregulation and liberalization were to blame for the crises in the oil and water industries. He also cited the controversial contracts entered into by the Ramos administration with various independent power producers (IPPs), which allegedly resulted in the hated PPA.

Human rights record

Beltran also described Ramos' human rights record as "fearsome."

"The anti-terrorism bills and other measures that seek to curb civil liberties and democratic rights such as a national ID system were crafted in his time. The military also launched countless offensives in Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon, resulting in massive human rights violations against civilians," he added.

"Politically, Ramos is a psywar expert who's keen at politicking and keeping his nose clean. But the verdict against Ramos was already seen when millions of Filipinos opposed his bid for an extended term via constitutional amendments or the original infamous Charter change campaign in 1997," Beltran said.



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1ST DAY IN OFFICE

Eala warms up as PBA commish

By June Navarro

EALA

IT WAS an unusual day for newly installed PBA commissioner Noli Eala. Yet the way he sounded, Eala's first day in office seemed nothing out of the ordinary.

His schedule planned much ahead of time, Eala started warming his commissionership portfolio yesterday in the morning by striking a deal with a top sports apparel company for the PBA rookie draft on Jan. 12 and the events leading to it.

Prior to lunch, the league's youngest commissioner at 39 met with the PBA marketing staff and discussed, among other things, some of their strategies for the 2003 season.

The work load seemed heavy enough for a man who woke up at 7:30 a. m., had a light workout and gulped down a bottle of Snapple fruit juice for breakfast.

But not for a workhorse like Eala.

"I usually don't eat breakfast. Normally, I review my schedule for the day and immediately buckle down to work," said Eala, who hit the sack at 2:45 a.m. Thursday after assessing the PBA budget this year.

Eala is proposing at least a 15-percent increase from last year's P155-million budget.

Right after replenishing his workaholic body with rice toppings for lunch, Eala then proceeded to PBA chair Jun Cabalan's office and discussed the housekeeping and timetable for key positions in the commissioner's office.

Also included in their agenda were the budget and program for the incoming PBA season, including the PBA properties which were turned over to Eala by former commissioner Jun Bernardino.

Eala said he would keep most, if not all, of the rank-and-file employees while retaining some of the personnel at the management level.

"As long as they (rank and file) don't have a blot on their record, I will most likely retain them. There will be minor changes though, but only on the alignment of positions," said Eala.

"There should be continuity on the programs so it's necessary to keep them," added Eala, who will hold a staff meeting today at 9 in the morning.

Eala has already submitted a list of people whom he feels comfortable to work with, especially in the three key positions directly under his control.

Eala has enlisted a financial comptroller from a multi-national corporation to handle money matters for the commissioner's office.

A franchising expert from Georgetown University and a marketing man who had put up major entertainment events across the globe are the top candidates for the marketing portfolio.

The operations man will be a toss-up between Ricky Palou and a lawyer who came from a sports-loving family and was connected to the operations of the now-defunct MBA.

Eala's suggestions on the PBA's key personnel, however, are still subject to the approval of the board.

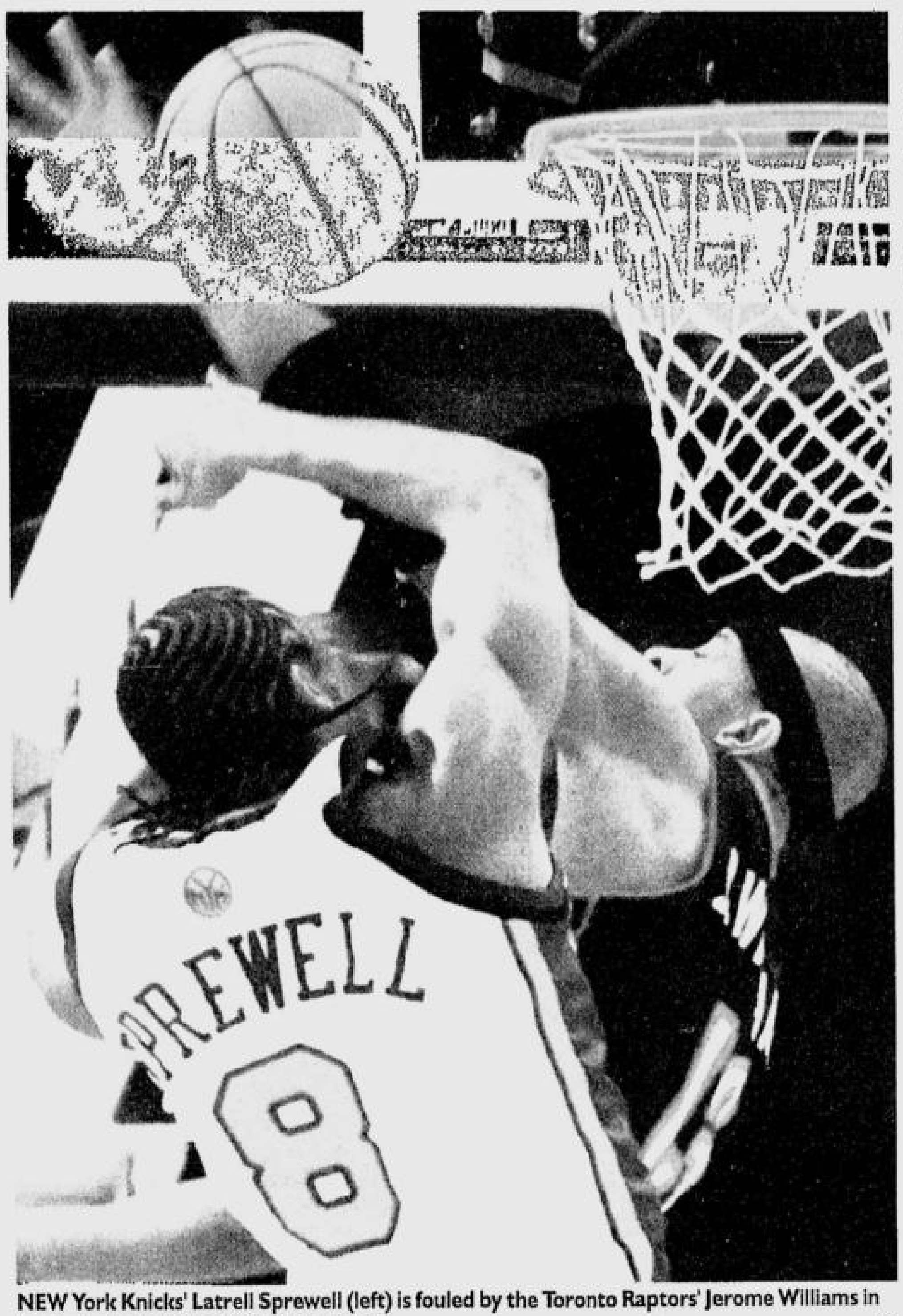
After discussing some of the nitty gritty within his office with Cabalan, Eala gathered the PBA production and marketing staff at 3 p.m. and prepared the program for the annual rookie draft at Glorietta and the rookie camp at SM Megamall on Jan. 10.

The meeting lasted until 6 p.m. Shortly after, Eala met with another group of advertisers, this time a clique of agencies bidding to map out the advertising plans for the league.

During his spare time, Eala kept on reviewing the PBA's Memorandum of Agreement with NBN-4, polishing it so the MOA would be put in effect within the week.

Eala ended his first day as commissioner of Asia's first play-for-pay league by attending to his 10:30 p. m. news program at IBC-13.

But it doesn't stop there. Eala has still plenty of work to do. He will be sifting through tons of paperwork at home and prepare for another bruising day of a mind-draining work.



NEW York Knicks' Latrell Sprewell (left) is fouled by the Toronto Raptors' Jerome Williams in the first quarter. The Knicks won, 95-75.

AFP

Knicks, Heat down rivals

NEW YORK—Kurt Thomas had 26 points and 14 rebounds and Allan Houston scored 15 as the New York Knicks beat Toronto 95-75 in the NBA Wednesday night, handing the Raptors their eighth straight loss.

Michael Doleac and Charlie Ward each added 11 points for the Knicks, who dominated the final three quarters and were never threatened in the second half. New York has won two straight and three of its last four games.

Alvin Williams had 15 points and five assists and Jelani McCoy had 13 points and 15 rebounds for the short-handed Raptors, who were without starters Vince Carter and Antonio Davis as well as forward Mamadou N'Diaye. Toronto completed a winless five-game road trip by scoring only 13 points in the fourth quarter, and has lost 15 of its last 17 games.

In the only other game at Atlanta, Caron Butler scored 25 points and Eddie Jones added 20 to lead the Heat to a 107-73 drubbing of the Hawks.

AP

MJ makes 2nd return to Chicago

WASHINGTON—A trip to Chicago to play basketball will always be special to Michael Jordan, even if this one isn't as emotional as last year's.

Jordan will dress in the visitors' locker room at the United Center for only the second time Thursday night (Friday morning in Manila), when his Washington Wizards play his former team, the Chicago Bulls.

Chicago fans nearly drove Jordan to tears with a long standing ovation when the starting lineups were announced during his first return 12 months ago. Jordan played one of the most nervous games of his career, committing a career-high nine turnovers and scoring 16 points in a 77-69 victory.

"I've gotten a year removed from that," Jordan said. "It's always going to be home, and fans are always going to be someone I have high regard for. They built my career, basically, with their support, and I'm going back now as someone who's trying to beat their team. I imagine they're going to have the same respect, but they're going to be loyal, too."

One difference is that the Bulls are actually becoming a competitive team. They were so bad last year that the game had little meaning beyond Jordan's presence.

But Chicago ended Portland's eight-game winning streak Tuesday night, beating the Trail Blazers 102-87, and the Bulls are 11-20.

AP

Chess finals today

THE FINALS for the selection of the members of 2003 US-bound Milo Checkmate team begin at 9:30 a.m. today at the former fishing wharf of Greenhills Shopping Center in San Juan.

Eight final berths will be contested among the 12 semifinalists and the first members of the team who went to US last July in this age-group round-robin event.

Fifteen-year-old Emmanuel Emperado of St. James College of Parañaque, last year's top scorer in US, will be seeded in the finals along with 10-year-old Gabriel Layugan, who tied for first place with top seed Liu Zheng of China during the Beijing Invitational Youth Chess Championships (under 10) held in Beijing, China, in July 2001.

Active tourney

THE ACTIVE Chess Center of Asia Inc., in cooperation with the Philippine Science High School and the Grandmaster Eugenio Torre Chess Institute (Getci), will organize the first High School Chess Team Open tournament on Feb. 6-9 at the PSHS along Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

The tournament, which will coincide with the Science and Math Week of the PSHS, is open to private and public high schools.

For other details, contact Acca project coordinator Saniata Lachica at tel. 892-9091 or tournament director NM Robert Suelo Jr. at 892-8759 or e-mail: acca@info.com.ph

Star-studded cast joining RP int'l jungolf tilt Jan. 7

A STAR-STUDDED field of 80 has so far signed up for the sixth Samsung Philippine International Junior Golf Championship starting Jan. 7 at Wack Wack.

Edgardo "Tito Boy" Cantada, president of the organizing Philippine Junior Golf Federation, bared this yesterday. In the fifth edition last year, 70 players from nine countries took part.

"So far, Thailand is coming with 15 entries, Singapore is next with 10, followed by Hong Kong five and Malaysia three," said Cantada. "From our side, we will have about 40 players coming from Bacolod City, Cagayan de Oro City, Silang, Cavite, Pampanga and our own Philippine Junior Golf Development Association."

Cantada also expressed his gratitude to those who are supporting the tournament launched in 1998 to establish an annual international junior event in the region.

"First of all, I would like to thank Sang Youl Eom, the president and chief executive officer of Samsung Phils. Corp for making Samsung the title sponsor of the event," he said. "At the same time, our gratitude also goes to Cebu Pacific as the tournament's official carrier, Wilson as the official ball, Gatorade as the official thirst quencher and Edsa Shangri-La as the official hotel."

The Philippines' JR Tanpinco is coming back to defend the overall title in the 18-21 age division.

Racing Tips

AT SAN LAZARO
BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Little Sam 2. Race for Gold 3. Lady Queen 4. Trail Blazer

Race 2--1. Inner Wheeler 2. Morning Nell/Common Ground 3. Alluring

Race 3--1. Morning After 2. Assunta de Rio 3. Del Mar 4. The Painter 5. Shuttle's Magic

Race 4--1. Flower Power 2. Wing Away 3. Bastonero

Race 5--1. Dandansoy 2. Maayo Kaayo 3. Rapid Strike 4. Free Time 5. Gifted Galloper 6. Dampi

Race 6--1. Gossip Column 2. Alert One 3. Zenie's Pride

Race 7--1 Material Maker 2. Dynasty 3. Proud Spirit

Race 8--1. Queen Matawe 2. Men of Honor 3. Queen Storm 4. Golden Quest 5. Gimme A Ring

Race 9--1. Dynamite Jack 2. Shade Purple Gray 3. Cristel Jay 4. Yoko Lady

Race 10--1. Privately Owned/Ground Fighter 2. Pilgrim 3. Dominant Dancer 4. Witch Craft 5. Roulette Queen 6. Lucky Gambit

Bravo to Bert's new babe named Grappa's

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I REALLY can't understand the national psyche. For, why brand President Macapagal's decision not to run for president next year as a supreme self-sacrifice? Some even equate it to Rizal's martyrdom.

Yuk. It sucks.

That's the trouble with us, dear fellas. We have lost all sense of logic. Too much of the good life during the holidays, maybe?

Darn.

Where's the sacrifice there? What sacrifice are we talking about here? Who says not running for president of this republic is an act of martyrdom?

The real supreme self-sacrifice is when one becomes president; the running is but a portent of things to come once you get to the Palace by the Pasig. For one, it is the most difficult job one can aspire for. Ask Erap. For another, being president makes you the nation's No. 1 servant; if that's not supreme self-sacrifice, what is?

The trouble, indeed, starts when we lose focus on the true nature of the position: Service.

When you are the Philippine president, doesn't that make you the No. 1 target of all criticisms when the economy is down?

When you are the Philippine president, doesn't that make you the No. 1 punching bag of virtually all the nation's unemployed?

When you are the Philippine president, doesn't that make you the No. 1 shock absorber of all the gripes of the poor?

So, tell me, what supreme self-sacrifice are we talking about here when Ate Glo decided not to run for president next year?

If you ask me, her decision not to run will instead put an end to the sacrifices she's experiencing right now and the many more that will come her way in the next 18 months or so that she is president.

So, will Cito Dayrit also end his sacrifices next year by announcing now that he will not seek reelection as Olympic president in 2004?

C'mon, let's get real. Let's make heroes out of real heroes. Ninoy Aquino was one. He came home from his comfortable Boston home despite knowing about threats to his life. If his death by the tarmac in 1983 was not martyrdom, what is?

In the meantime, here's a continuation of my wish list for 2003.

- Bert Bravo of Caffé Appassionato fame (heard his newly opened Grappa's at Greenbelt Makati has now become a Dolphy favorite) and the godfather of the U-Bix Riviera National Pro-Am Golf becoming a grandfather.
- Rod Feliciano finally seeing his DHL-Mizuno Team win the FIL title in the annual Fil-Am Golf after his wards won the AM crown for the second straight year at both Camp John Hay and Baguio Country Club.
- Jun Bernardino enjoying his newly found freedom from the oftentimes cruel clutches attendant to the post of PBA commissioner.
- Rico Agcaoili getting a respite from the asides of our Cocktales' Vic Agustin.
- Sonny Barrios finding solace in the nippy weather provided by his Tagaytay hideaway all year round.
- Fr. Tito Caluag and Arben Santos joining forces anew as Ateneo goes for a back-to-back victory in the UAAP.
- Freddie Alquiros sustaining his zeal in making Camp John Hay the best tourist destination in Baguio City.

3 PBA commissioners, 4 entities are PSA awardees

THREE former commissioners of the Philippine Basketball Association and four entities will be the recipients of lifetime achievement awards from the Philippine Sportswriters Association during the PSA 2002 Annual Awards Night Jan. 10 at the Holiday Inn Manila.

The individual awardees are PBA commissioners Jun Bernardino, Rudy Salud and Leo Prieto who steered Asia's first professional basketball league into a premier league.

The entities are the Coke Go-for-Goal, Metropolitan Chess Club, Milo Best and San Miguel Corporation.

Bernardino was commissioner from 1993 to 2002, executive director from 1982 to 1993 and PBA board secretary from 1983 to 1987.

From January to July 1982 he was on the sportscaster's panel of Vintage enterprises, producer of PBA games.

Outside of the PBA, he was assistant coach and team manager of the Filsyn team in the PBA in 1980-81 and physical education instructor of International School from 1977 to 1980. He was PE instructor of the University of the Philippines, where he obtained his bachelor's degree and became chairman of the UP Maroons Sports Foundation, Inc.

He was assistant coach of the RP men's team in 1979 and of the women's team in 1976 and head coach of both the UP Maroons men's and women's teams.

Salud was the third PBA commissioner. A prominent lawyer, he was first secretary general of the World Boxing Council, whose constitution and by-laws he drafted, and eventually became a respected boxing promoter and manager. He was former president of the Manila Jockey Club.

Prieto was the first PBA commissioner, who earlier served as coach of the multi-titled YCO Painters in the Manila Industrial and Commercial Athletic Association, precursor of the PBA. The Coke Go-for-Goal is a successful football program, which Coca-Cola sustained for over a decade using corporate funds to promote football among the youth nationwide.

The MCC is the only club that consistently promotes chess among young chess talents. Its effective system of training has produced players of national master caliber, many of whom have represented the country in international competitions.

Milo has been at the forefront of youth basketball training under its Milo Best program, designed to give aspiring young cagers the science of basketball under the supervision of experienced national trainers.

San Miguel Corporation, aside from maintaining its professional basketball team, is a consistent sponsor of major tournaments as well as programs that reach out to the grassroots level.

The Awards Night is sponsored by Red Bull, Photokina and Agfa and supported by Samsung, San Miguel Corporation, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Philippine Sports Commission and adidas.

It will be telecast by NBN-4.

Dazz wants Villanueva for PBL bid

GAMES TOMORROW
(Lipa Sports Cultural Center)
2 p.m.--Montaña vs Sunkist-Pampanga
4 p.m.--Dazz vs LBC-Batangas

HERE'S a real New Year stunner: Enrico Villanueva playing for Dazz Dishwashing Liquid.

Dazz team manager Bernard Yang said yesterday that the 6-foot-6 Ateneo slotman might yet play for Dazz in the PBL Challenge Cup.

The MVP of the last UAAP cage wars is a cinch to be among the Top 3 in the PBA Draft on Jan. 12. His main opponents for the top Draft pick position are Mike Cortez and Romel Adducul.

But he can still play for the PBL as the PBA does not start until next month.

Yang said Villanueva has sent feelers that he's willing to help the Greasebusters in their bid to claim the No. 2 spot in the PBL Challenge Cup, which will resume tomorrow in Lipa City.

"It's true, Enrico Villanueva hopes he could play for us upon his return from the US tomorrow (today). He said he wants to help the team get into the championship," Yang said.

But there's one hitch: Is Villanueva fit to play?

"Coach Baculi wants to see first if Enrico is fit to play after the long vacation. If he is, he might see action on Saturday when we play LBC-Batangas in Lipa City," Yang said.

The addition of Villanueva will make Dazz Dishwashing Paste probably the second tallest team after Welcoat since 6-foot-4 former MBA MVP John Ferriols is ready to see action on Saturday.

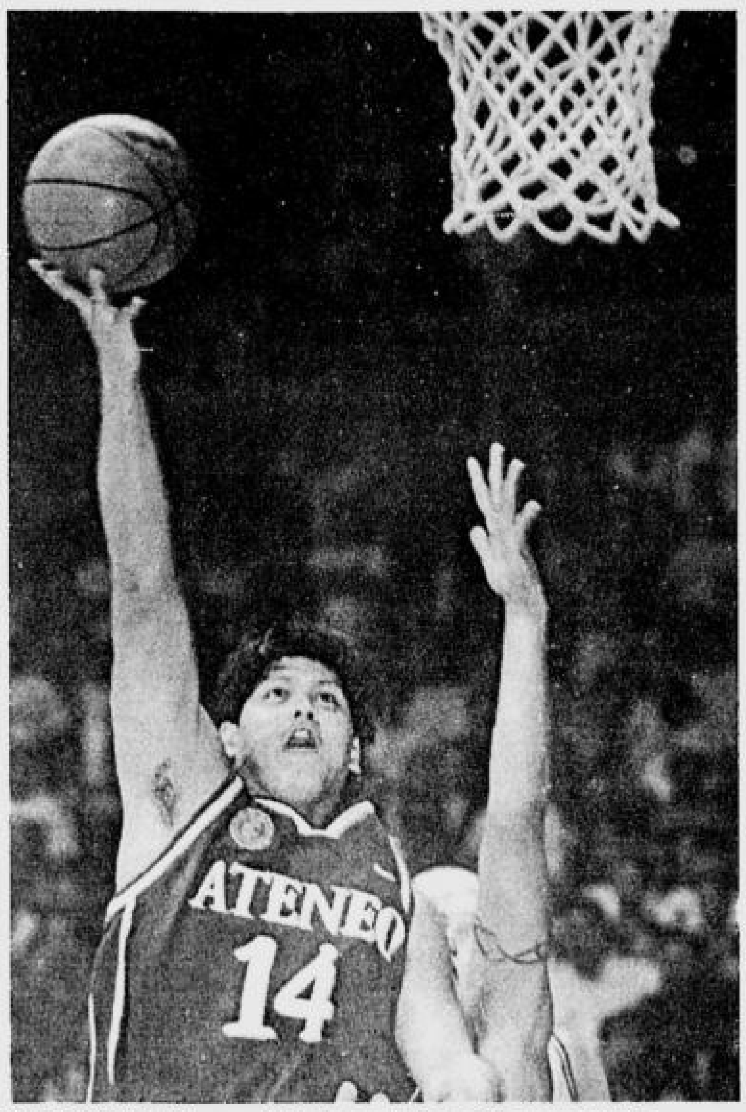
The Greasebusters must hurdle their last three assignments to claim the No. 2 spot and enjoy the twice-to-beat incentive in the crossover semifinals.

And with Villanueva and Ferriols playing alongside the core of Allan Salangsang, Eugene Tan, Cyrus Baguio, Nino Gelig and Peter June Simon, the Greasebusters have better chances of avenging their 53-56 setback to the Batangas Blades last Dec. 5.

"Our realistic goal is to get the No. 3 spot, pero mas maganda kung makuha namin ang No. 2. Sana, the long break will work to our favor," said Dazz coach Junel Baculi.

Meanwhile, PBL fans can log in their reactions and comments at the new PBL website--www.mypbl.com where highlights of the successful PBL Showcase are currently featured.

The interactive website gives PBL fans the chance to get the latest PBL news, interact with their favorite players, chat with their fellow PBL fans, view the exciting action shots of their idols and get nostalgic as they glance through the history of the PBL and the old pictures of today's PBA superstars. *ASM*



VILLANUEVA: Very much in demand due to his overpowering performance in his farewell stint for Ateneo in the last UAAP cagefest.

PDI PHOTO

RP batters blank Taipei, pocket Zhujiang Cup

HONG KONG—The Philippines blanked Chinese Taipei, 8-0, to win the Zhujiang Cup International Invitational Baseball Tournament Wednesday at the Yuen Long Stadium here.

Ernesto Binarao sparkled with his 3-hit, 5-strikeout, no base-on-balls performance in seven innings as the Filipinos dominated the Taiwanese.

After a scoreless first inning, the RP boys erupted with five runs in the second on a lead-off single to right field by Ric Jimenez, followed by a back-to-back single by Caspillo, Pinero, Empacis, Recto and Angeles. In the fourth inning, Empacis singled once again, followed by another single by Recto. With two men on base, Angeles hit a homerun to centerfield for a 3-run homer.

Angeles won the Most Valuable Player Award while Binarao was awarded Best Pitcher. Ely Baradas bagged the Best Coach trophy.

PABA President Hector C. Navasero invited the participants to join the first Asia Pacific International Invitational Tournament to be held in Manila this coming April.

Backing the meet are the Philippine Sports Commission under Chair Eric Buhain, Philippine Tourism Authority under Secretary Richard Gordon and the Philippine Amateur Baseball Association under Chair Dr. Emmanuel Y. Angeles, (currently CEO of the Clark Development Commission).

SPORTSTV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA - Washington vs Chicago, 8:30 a.m. (r - 11:30 p.m.), Star Sports, Philadelphia vs Phoenix, 11 a.m. (r - 9 p.m.), Solar Sports
AMERICAN FOOTBALL: 2002 Continental Tire Bowl, 1 p.m., ESPN
NFL Super Bowl II Highlights, 4:30 p.m., ESPN
TENNIS: Hopman Cup, 11 a.m. (r) and 4:30 p.m., Star Sports

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1993, Maricris Fernandez beat Marisue Jacutin, 6-3, 6-3, to snare the girls' title of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) East Asian Juniors circuit (Manila leg) at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

ANDRADA CUP

Olongapo's Tierro barges into quarterfinals

OLONGAPO City bet Patrick John Tierro stayed on track for a fourth straight boys' 18-under title, stamping his class over James Murrell, 6-1, 6-0, yesterday to reach the quarterfinals of the season-opening Andrada Cup age-group tennis tournament at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The second-ranked Tierro, champion in the Milo Juniors, PCA Open Juniors and Copa de Manila last year, will meet Davao City's Ed Angelo Diez, who scored a 6-2, 6-0 victory over Carlo Navarro.

In other matches, top seed Irwin de Guzman of La Salle-Greenhills beat William Murrell, 6-3, 6-1, and Ken Fernan Agnes defeated John Paolo Alcahupas, 6-2, 6-0.

In the girls' 16-under class, Julie Em Botor rallied past Ana Isabel Soriano, 6-1, 5-7, 7-5, Bambi Zoleta blasted Ma. Kristine Baldonado, 6-0, 6-0, Jessica Agra clobbered Melissa Orteza, 6-2, 6-2, Trudy Amoranto trounced Amanda Romero and Ara Micayabas walked over Nozomi Fukushima to reach the quarterfinals of this event sponsored by Thaddeus Sporting Goods and Wilson balls.

In the unisex 10-under division, Kyle Cordero outplayed Ronell Santiago, 7-5, 6-4, Leander Lazaro blasted Jan Emmanuel Garcia, 6-0, 6-1, Alberto Villamor demolished Calvin Canlas, 6-0, 6-1 and Fredmore Dominisac defeated Tsutomo Fukushima, 6-4, 6-3 to enter the quarterfinals.

First-round winners in the boys' 12-under category were Akio Sy over Francisco Cabrera, 6-1, 6-1, Kim Ivor Saraza over Roman Paolo Floreza, 6-1, 6-0 and Raymarc Santiago over Yuichi Fukushima, 6-0, 6-0.

In the boys' 14-under division, Julius Lagman survived Carl Pabalan, 6-0, 3-6, 6-1, and Nico Katigbak downed Rodel Navarro, 6-2, 6-2, Mark Balce dumped Miggy Enriquez, 6-0, 6-0, Patrick Arevalo downed Ronell Enilo, 6-1, 6-4 and James Carl Canete beat Bryan Lontok, 6-0, 6-2, to join top seeds Christian Canlas, Russell Arcilla Jr., Johnwill Baldonado, Joshua Tan Ho and Gerard Michael Ngo in the second round.

Macasaets hosting Pasay derby tonight

A BIGTIME 4-cock derby will be Pasay City Cockpit's firestarter for 2003, with the father and son team of Jake and Butch Macasaet as hosts. Sagupaan Complexor 3000 and Sagupaan Mite Free are the exclusive sponsors.

At stake is a cash prize of P300,000 while entry fee is P10,000.

Among the participants are Ucap stalwarts Vic Yu, Biboy Enriquez, Patrick Antonio, Pol Estrellado, Blandy Tolentino, Mario Villamor, Tony Lasala and Benjie Lim. Also seeing action are Judge Diokno, Ashley Arayata, Boy de Roca, Gerald Go, William Co, Lito Orillaza, Romero Yu and Danny Ty among others.

Meanwhile, pit managers Oscar Gonzales, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano announced that other 4-cock derbies are scheduled on Jan. 10 (Boyet Medina and Gerald Go); Jan. 17 (Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) and Jan. 24 (Cito Manansala). A 5-cock derby is slated on Jan. 31 (Jun Marasigan).

For other information, call tels. 816-6750, 843-1746 and 843-1890.

An Open Letter to Philta President Col. Salvador Andrada

Dear Col. Andrada,

Foremost, I wish to thank you for the Christmas greetings you sent – here's wishing you the same for happiness and specially good health.

On election day come Jan. 4, our much publicized rivalry will come to a head. As I've openly admitted, you will win the elections and become national Philta president for a fifth term up to 2006.

For once in our tennis lives, I ask that we forget personal differences, set aside the one-sided Philta constitution and by-laws and simply work towards a better RP tennis. It wouldn't bother me if people think that since I'm on the losing side, I'm batting for a concession. Tennis-loving Filipinos – from Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao – know the real story anyway. The true score!

In 3 occasions the past few weeks thru the intercessions of our well-meaning sports friends, we've failed to personally meet to resolve an important issue for the development of Philippine tennis starting January 2003.

You want to become Philta president with a unanimous victory, we want to upgrade Open tennis and strengthen our homegrown RP men's tennis team. We want to showcase and maximize the real talents of Johnny Arcilla and company to the world.

Only by working together can we achieve our noble goals!

In all honesty, I believe that your heart is aching for reforms – our CTW group can help you re-define the effectiveness and the prestige of your Philta presidency.

But I also know the situation is a bit more complicated than it seems. You have to contend with your Philta officials and your own sports circle. Well you might just get the surprise of your life that majority of your tennis officials are in favor that we work together.

Those who oppose the ultimate unity that we wish to achieve would then expose their own selfish and negative motives. In such a situation, you must stamp your political will with finality.

If our beloved President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo mustered enough courage and political will in declaring she would no longer seek another term in 2004 for the sake of national unity and set the tone for a stronger and progressive Philippines, why can't we – as true leaders in tennis – follow her lead in bringing the Philippine tennis back on its feet.

Let us invite all tennis-loving Filipinos – specially players and tennis parents – to attend the Philta elections set at 10 a.m. on Jan. 4 at the Manila Midtown Hotel.

This is their election – not ours! What good is the Philta without followers? The future of their kids, the fun of the weekend players in Northern Luzon, the sunrisers club in the Visayas, the commercial players in Mindanao, the ballboys and trainers, all the prospective sponsors. Let's give them a big bright future and a Happy New Year!

Yours in tennis,
(Sgd.) Jovy S. Mamawal

Belgians outmaneuver Uzbeks, meet US next

PERTH, Australia–Xavier Malisse shunted his flamboyant game back on track at the Hopman Cup on Thursday to lead Belgium past Uzbekistan in the mixed team event.

A semi-finalist at Wimbledon last year, Malisse has blown hot and cold since but at the Burswood Dome he was able to put a shaky start and a mystery illness behind him to beat Oleg Ogorodov 6-3 6-7 6-2 and clinch the win for the fourth-seeded Belgians.

They next meet the top-seeded United States on Friday for a place in the final of the A$1 million ($563,400) tournament.

In Group B, second seeds Australia face the Czech Republic later on Thursday.

Earlier Kim Clijsters notched up her first win of the new year, steamrolling Uzbek Iroda Tulyaganova to nudge Belgium into the lead. Clijsters and Malisse also won the mixed 6-1 6-1.

World number four Clijsters punched groundstrokes all round the indoor Burswood court to see off the 55th-ranked Tulyaganova 6-3 6-2 in her singles match. *Reuters*

Srichaphan advances

MADRAS, India---Second-seed Paradorn Srichaphan brushed aside Dutchman John Van Lottum, 6-2, 6-4, to storm into the quarter-finals of the Indian Open on Wednesday.

The 23-year-old from Bangkok, who was named "Thai of the Year" by a survey after finishing the season ranked 16th in the world, ruthlessly displayed the form that took him up 110 places in the world rankings last year.

Paradorn, runner-up here last year to Argentine Guillermo Canas, won titles at Stockholm and Long Island in 2002 and recorded victories over six top 10 players including world number one Lleyton Hewitt of Australia. *Reuters*

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METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino

Concert producer jailed

Felix Co, a big-time concert and special events producer, was arrested yesterday by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation for failing to appear at his arraignment before a Manila court on estafa charges worth some P5 million. Co, owner of Maximedia Entertainment, is concert producer for artists like Lea Salonga and Martin Nievera.

GORDON

Gordon says PNP drove Scouts away

By Jerome Aning

THE Philippine National Police was to blame for the cancellation of the visit of some 800 British Boy Scouts to Manila, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon said yesterday.

Gordon said the PNP "unwittingly drove the Scouts away" when it came out last November with a statement boasting that the Boy Scouts are coming despite threats by the Abu Sayyaf.

Some 3,000 British Boy Scouts, aged 14 to 18, are participating the 20th World Jamboree in Sattahip, Thailand.

Some 20,000 scouts from all over the world are attending the jamboree, which will last until Jan. 7.

The British scouts were set to make short visits to Asian countries such as the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia

John Fogg, spokesman for the British scouts organization, said on Tuesday that the visit was cancelled due to security fears

No money, man takes wife hostage

AN unemployed husband took his wife hostage in Sampaloc, Manila for refusing to give him money to buy illegal drugs.

RJ Tabifranca, 22, was armed with a glass bottle shard when he grabbed his wife Candy in their room around 2:15 p.m.

Western Police District spokesman Jerry Aguno told reporters that Tabifranca and his wife had an argument after the latter refused to give him money to buy shabu.

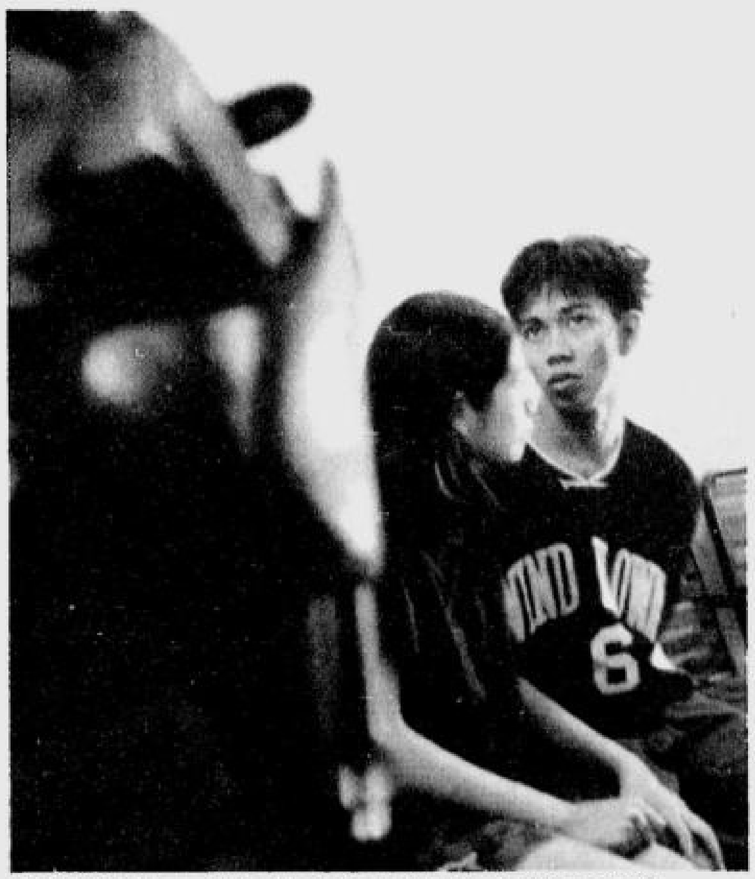
The suspect was already under the influence of drugs when he took his wife hostage for 15 minutes, Agunod added.

Agunod, quoting Candy's father, said that Candy tolerated her husband's addiction until he started beating her up when she did not give him money.

Candy decided she had had enough and told him she would report him to authorities.

Enraged, Tabifranca, grabbed a glass bottle shard, seized his wife and took her hostage when she screamed for help from neighbors.

WPD Station 4 commander Supt. Bernardo Diaz said he ordered his men to storm the room around 3 p.m. when the suspect asked to talk and for some food.



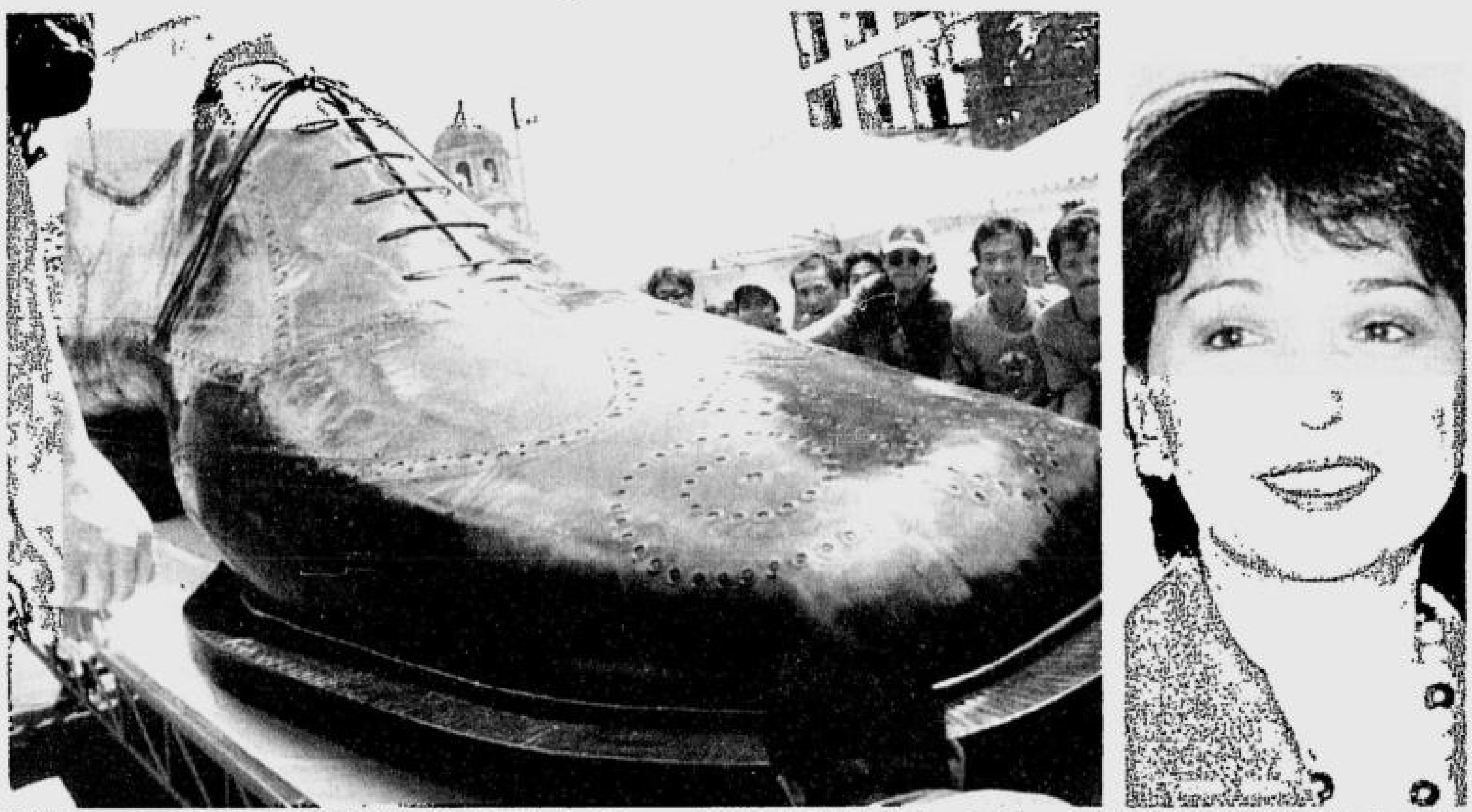
HOSTAGE taker, still looking lost, re-united with his poor wife.
RANDY HORMILLOSA

Here's it, Cowboy

There's one screaming reason why Aira Rose Antonio (right) is in tears at the East Ave. Medical Center in Quezon City. She's one of the victims of indiscriminate firing of guns on New Year's Eve. The gory piece of scalp (far right) hit by a stray bullet and gnarled by stitches, also happens to be hers. The Philippine National Police had strictly prohibited the indiscriminate firing of guns by its men during the hours approaching the New Year, when celebrations were at their maddest. Some cops had been charged with the offense, but officials also claimed the accidents could have been caused by private gun owners. Story below.
JOAN BONDOC

Do a President Arroyo, Marikina mayor dared

By Nelson Flores



WITH this giant leather shoe, officially recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as the biggest in the globe, Marikina City, shoe capital of the Philippines, became a headliner mainly on the efforts of Mayor Marides Fernando (right).

IT was bound to happen. Yesterday, Mayor Marides Fernando of Marikina was asked to take President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for a model.

Actor and former Marikina City Councilor Sonny Parsons challenged Mayor Fernando to do the ultimate political sacrifice similar to what Pres. Macapagal-Arroyo did by withdrawing from the 2004 presidential election.

Parsons dared Fernando to replicate the President's gesture for the sake of Marikina constituents.

Parsons said Fernando could do Marikenyos a favor by desisting from engaging in partisan politics and concentrating on substantial developmental issues. He said that, by renouncing her political ambitions, Fernando could devote all her energies in developing the city.

Parsons claimed that, right now, Fernando's efforts are devoted to politicking and public relations.

He added that much of her projects, like the high-profile riverside beautification and the construction of grand edifice, are geared toward this end to the disadvantage of other more important projects like livelihood creation and maintenance of peace and order.

"She is obviously more concerned about being reelected than about the welfare of the ordinary Marikenyos," Parsons claimed.

To prove her sincerity towards the ordinary Marikenyos, she should renounce her political ambition and become an impartial local executive otherwise all her activities and intense media relations effort would be politically tainted, Parsons said.

"We would have more investors and Marikina would truly prosper if the local government would be serious in developing the city and not engage in public relations politics," Parsons said stressing that "the local administration should not busy itself in engaging the political opponents of her family in a tit-for-tat accomplishment showdown."

Fernando recently expressed confidence that she was unbeatable in the coming mayoral elections, citing her accomplishments and those of her husband, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, who transformed Marikina City into a bustling city in eastern Metro Manila during his nine-year term that began in 1992.

A source privy to the activities of the Fernandos said Marides is also sure that the opposition party in Marikina would not field any mayoral bet since they do not have the resources to do so.

The source added that, despite the failure of the administration to curb the rising incidence of criminality in the city, Marides is confident that her achievements, like the beautification and greening of the city, are enough to earn a re-election.

"It would take decades before they (the opposition) could even get a chance to unseat our family," the source quoted Marides as saying.

Marikina lately made headlines with its feat of fashioning out the world's largest pair of leather shoes, which was officially recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records.

Public blamed but some cops charged with indiscriminate firing of guns

By Alcuin Papa and Jerome Aning

STRAY bullets that hit victims during the New Year's Eve revelry did not come from policemen's guns.

Officials of the Central Police District made this claim yesterday even as several cops were charged for indiscriminate firing of firearms in other metropolitan areas.

Blame was put on private gun owners.

Sr. Supt. Napoleon Castro, Central Police District director, said that ballistic tests conducted on slugs taken from the victims showed that none of the slugs came from any of the service firearms of the 3,000 policemen of the CPD.

But in Manila, three policemen face dismissal from the service after allegedly firing their firearms indiscriminately in Tondo as 2003 approached.

A Malabon City policeman was also arrested in Tondo for threatening two neighbors and responding policemen.

The belated complaints against SPO1s Isagani Salvador and Renato Yumang of the Western Police Districts Station 7 and 10, and PO1 Reynaldo Lagmitan of Malabon were brought to the WPD general assignments section on Jan. 1 and 2.

Suzete Sumaway, 23, said brother-in-law SPO1 Salvador fired his gun indiscriminately about 11 p.m. on Dec. 31 in front of her house at 2247 F. Varona St., Tondo while she, her relatives and friends were celebrating.

PO1 Lagmitan, meanwhile, was apprehended by WPD operatives after firing his weapon around 9:20 p.m. Tuesday at San Nicolas St., Tondo.

Meanwhile, the WPD has asked National Capital Regional Police Office to turn over its operative who shot and injured two students on New Year's eve.

The GAS said PO1 Francis Galleras (not Gallaris as earlier reported) is a member of the NCRPO's criminal investigation unit.

The two victims, Christopher Guban, 20, and Benedict Omela, 13, are recuperating from their injuries at the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center in Sta. Cruz.

The Philippine National Police had implemented "Oplan Silent Gun" during the New Year celebrations to prevent policemen from firing indiscriminately firing their guns by taping the opening of the muzzles.

National Capital Region Police Office chief Deputy Director Gen. Reynaldo Velasco yesterday visited three of the five victims of stray bullets at the East Avenue Medical Center.

The two police chiefs gave victims Angelo Dizon, Amelita Adolfo, both of Project 7, and Aira Rose Antonio, of Veterans Village, Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City, financial assistance.

Castro said that the stray bullets that hit the victims might have come from firearms of private citizens who fired their guns at the height the celebrations.

WAZZZZ UP?
Cowboy Grill ALMANZA, LAS PIÑAS — MR. ROXY / CRO MAGNON — AEGIS JAN. 21 ☎ 801.7644
Cowboy Grill ARQUIZA ST. MANILA — KOOLJACKS / FAT 16 / PHYRIGIAN — AEGIS JAN. 14 ☎ 525.1474
Cowboy Grill REMEDIOS ST. MALATE — POWER SURGE / BROWNIE / MUSIC CIRCUIT — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 521.8143
Cowboy Grill NOVALICHES, QUEZON CITY — STREETLIFE / J. BROTHERS — AEGIS JAN. 28 ☎ 936.9757
TIA MARIA'S JUPITER ST. MAKATI CITY — FIRST SIGHT / CITY BORN — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 890.4735
TIA MARIA'S REMEDIOS, MALATE — JOSH / 3RD DEGREE — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 522.0429
TIA MARIA'S TOMAS MORATO, Q.C. — FU FLAVA / 3RD MOVEMENT — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 371.1473
Cowboy Grill BIÑAN, LAGUNA — POWER ON / VERSE 7 — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ (049)511.7268
Partyplace SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA — BRIDGES ☎ (045) 961.3360
FRIDAY 01.03.2003

Girl, 2, shot to death by teenage cousin

By Tina Santos

POLICE are hunting down a 17-year-old boy who allegedly shot dead his 2-year-old cousin when the gun he was playing with accidentally went off in Caloocan City last Wednesday.

Victim Febbie Joy Concepcion, of Kaunlaran Village, Caloocan City, died while undergoing treatment at the Reyes Memorial Medical Center (RRMMC) where she was moved after she was first brought to the Ospital ng Caloocan, police said.

Officer-on-case PO2 Michael Viray said the incident occurred at 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday.

The suspect was playing with a hand gun of still unknown caliber inside the victim's house where the child was sleeping, police said.

The gun went off, and the child took the bullet in the head, police said.

Relatives rushed the victim to the hospital where she died during treatment.

Police said that before the accident, the victim's father identified only as "Ferdinand" saw the teenage suspect playing with the gun and tucking it in his waist.

The suspect's father supposedly took the gun from the boy and removed the bullets, but returned the weapon to the boy.

Apparently, a bullet still remained in the gun chamber, police said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, January 3, 2003
Before Epiphany

1st Reading: 1 Jn 2:29-3:6
Gospel: Jn 1:29-34

John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, "There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. It is he of whom I said: A man comes after me who is already ahead of me, for he was before me. I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing to prepare for him, so that he might be revealed in Israel."

And John also gave this testimony, "I saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove from heaven and resting on him. I myself did not know him but God who sent me to baptize told me: 'You will see the Spirit coming down and resting on the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' Yes, I have seen! and I declare that this is the Chosen One of God."

Commentary

John the Baptist is once again pointing away from himself to the Son of God now among us! "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Moreover, John also deepens our understanding of who Jesus, this One-who-is-to-come who has come, is. "I saw the Spirit coming down on him like a dove from heaven and resting on him," he adds. First, the dove-like form of the Spirit reminds us of the dove sent out by Noah from the ark, which returned with the branch that announced that the world, destroyed by the flood, was born anew. Thus, John tells us that Jesus is the beginning of the new creation. Secondly, the fact that John sees the Spirit remain upon Jesus tells us that Jesus is truly the Christ-a Greek word that means "the anointed"—the One anointed with the fullness of God's Spirit of life and love. This is who Jesus is: the One who bears the Spirit permanently and whose mission is to share his Spirit, his very life and energy, as it were, with us. This is Good News for us, especially during times when our energies and our expectations run low, when we feel incapable of loving, when our hearts feel dry and hard.

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2003 AGENDA

Fernando to intensify sidewalk clearing

By Leila B. Salaverria

THERE will be no let up in the activities of the Metro Manila Development Authority this 2003, particularly its controversial sidewalk clearing operations.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said on Tuesday that he would intensify projects that would make the roads more functional, foremost of which is the sidewalk clearing campaign.

He vowed to be more rigorous when it comes to implementing the law.

"Our first priority will still be making the roadways more user-friendly," Fernando said. "We also intend to push more vigorously for a stricter enforcement of regulations."

He has refused to halt his sidewalk clearing campaign even during the holidays despite protests, criticisms and appeals from the sidewalk vendors, saying he is only enforcing the law because sidewalks are for public use.

The MMDA chair also said major projects would start, especially the passenger terminals in the north and south of Metro Manila that are meant to decongest the traffic-prone thoroughfares.

Under the plan, provincial buses do not have to travel within the metropolis because they could park in the terminals.

The terminals would be connected to MRT and LRT lines so that the bus passengers could have easy access to public transport.

Fernando also said that this is the year when the public will know the results of the review of the Unified Vehicle Volume Reduction Program or the "color-coding" scheme.

"The decision will be out very soon," he said.

He also promised that several private subdivisions would definitely open their gates to the public because of the need for additional roadways, adding that some private subdivisions have voluntarily opened their gates to motorists.

Illegal terminals in Caloocan City cash cows of corrupt policemen

By Tina Santos

ILLEGAL terminals of FX taxis, jeepneys, buses and tricycles in Caloocan City continue to proliferate under the nose of the city police Traffic Enforcement Group.

These terminals are one of the main causes of traffic jams in the city, particularly in the Bonifacio Monument area, Rizal Avenue Extension and Samson Road.

They are also a 'very convenient' source of corruption for our traffic authorities," a source, who refused to be identified, told the INQUIRER.

The source said traffic authorities have supposedly been demanding grease money from operators of the vehicles in the illegal terminals.

In the middle of last year, Mayor Rey Malonzo ordered the crackdown on illegal terminals and the investigation of traffic cops allegedly making money from the operations.

Malonzo even vowed to punish any of his men who will be found to be involved in the malpractice.

But the mayor's order seemed to have fallen on deaf ears as the very same people, the traffic authorities who are supposed to implement the directive, are the ones who serve as "protectors" of these terminals, the source said.

"Traffic cops benefit so much from these terminals. They cannot just dismantle them. The local government's drive to rid the terminals always turn out to be "ningas kugon," the source said.

He added that most of the vehicles using the various illegal terminals in the city are colorum or out of line passenger jeepneys and buses.

The source cited the illegal terminal of more than a hundred passenger jeepneys plying the Polo-Acacia route at the corner of Lapu-Lapu Street and Samson Road.

He said most of the jeepneys using the terminal lack the necessary papers.

He further revealed that the drivers are forced to give daily protection money of P5 per trip so that they would not be driven out of the terminal and continue to ply their trade.

Illegal terminals of passenger jeepneys and FX taxis in Caloocan, like this one on Lapu-Lapu Street, cause massive traffic jams in the city.
JOAN BONDOC

"For them (drivers) the use of terminals is the easier way to get passengers. Besides, commuters seem to get used to the terminals since this is where they go," he said.

He admitted that their terminal is protected by a traffic cop from the city police. He said the drivers pay at least P350 a week to a certain Danny Mallari, who serve as the barker and maintainer of the terminal.

"But Mallari's main role is to collect "tong" from the drivers, which they turn over to the traffic authorities," the source said.

"Imagine the big sums of money (traffic cops) they collect from those drivers daily.

"For passenger jeepneys alone, at least 150 of them, the corrupt traffic cops earn at least P50,000 a week," the source said.

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SPIRIT WARRIORS
The ShortCut
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A MAQ AND ROADRUNNER PRESENTATION

Cops behind video karera, says mayor

THE PASAY City police force could not be trusted with the local government's revitalized campaign to rid the city of video *karera* machines, according to Pasay Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad.

The reason: Pasay policemen themselves are operating these illegal gambling machines.

"No offense to them but it has come to my attention that policemen are behind this racket," Trinidad yesterday told the INQUIRER. "Now how can I trust them?"

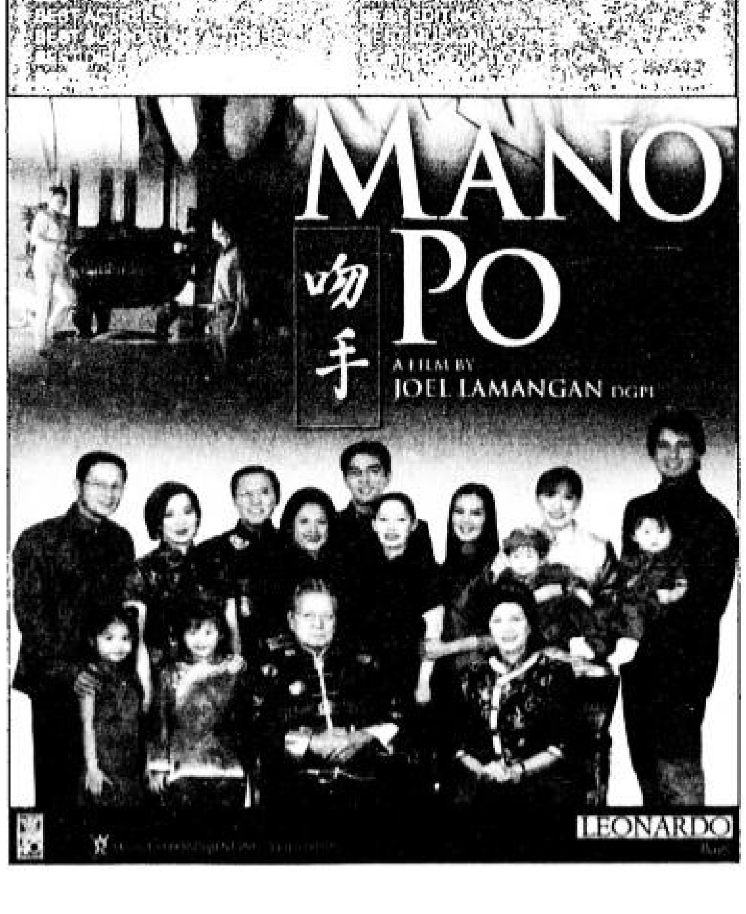
But Trinidad said he would relieve on the spot station commanders if video *karera* machines are confiscated in their areas by his raiding team.

The move is expected to further fuel the rift between Trinidad and Interior Secretary Jose Lina over the issue of Metropolitan Manila mayors gaining full control over the local police.

While mayors were convinced they had been granted full authority by virtue of President Macapagal's executive order last year, Lina had clarified that the order did not give local executives direct power to hire and fire officers.

Christian Esguerra

NOW SHOWING
MTRCB RATING G General Patronage ALL' AGES ADMITTED
MULTI AWARDED ENTRY OF MMFF 2002


MANO PO
吻手
A FILM BY JOEL LAMANGAN
LEONARDO

Small problem

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

HOW can a government agency function properly if there are two rival personalities heading it?

This may not sound too urgent at the moment, considering the jolting turn of events in the national political landscape.

But, whether she likes it or not, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has got to resolve the leadership issue at the Philippine Tourism Authority.

The President had supposedly terminated the services of Nixon Kua, a former newsman and appointee of former President Joseph Estrada.

But the man is still holding office there.

Also holding same post as Kua's is Dean Barbers, son of Sen. Robert Barbers, whom the President has appointed as PTA general manager.

***

Of course, the two PTA general managers hold office in two different floors.

Nothing, so far, has been heard from Barbers.

But yesterday, Kua sent us this press release with the headline:

"PTA General Manager enjoys fixed term of office, Former Justice Hugo Gutierrez opines"

Here's that release in full:

Former Supreme Court Justice Hugo Gutierrez, respected constitutional expert and jurist, today postulated a legal opinion stating that the term of office of PTA General Manager Nixon Kua has not expired and should be respected.

During the open forum of the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Seminar conducted by the University of the Philippines' Institute on Public Officers and Administrative Law, Gutierrez said that Malacañang seems to base its ouster of Mr. Kua on a Supreme Court decision involving the Comelec in Republic vs Imperial.

Justice Gutierrez said the case of Imperial does not apply because the Comelec is a collegial constitutional body whose members' term of office is rotational, while in the case of the PTA GM, his term of office is fixed, not to ensure a regular rotation but precisely to ensure stability and fixity of tenure.

Section 23-A of Presidential Decree 564 as amended, otherwise known as the Revised Charter of PTA provide as follows: "The general manager shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines and shall serve for a term of six (6) years, unless sooner removed for cause; provided, that upon expiration of his term, he shall serve as such until his successor shall have been appointed and qualified."

Justice Gutierrez further opined that, where the law fixes the term of an officer such as that in the PTA Charter, he cannot be removed from office except for cause as provided by law.

In the case of the incumbent PTA General Manager, Mr. Kua has not resigned nor abandoned his position, and neither has he been charged of any offense.

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

Stellar prospects for 2003

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

AS WE ease into the new year, we wonder which of this year's young starlets will become full-fledged stars in 2003. After checking with some insiders, we've come up with this short list of promising and deserving talents:

Among the male starlets, it's conceded that **Richard Gutierrez** is a particularly hot property. "Blame" it on his good looks, his show biz genes, his previous exposure to the field as a child star a decade ago, and some thespic honing in workshops conducted by the likes of **Gina Alajar**.

Whatever the actual operative combination of factors, producers are beating a path to the 17-year-old looker's door, after only seven months since he launched his career as a teen actor. It is felt that he will get his starring role in films next year.

We learn from Richard's father, **Eddie Gutierrez**, that the 5'10" actor's career was energized by his being tapped to appear regularly in the youth show "Click." This led to his joining a soap, then a sitcom, "Beh, Bote Nga." In no time at all, the young comer has been enjoying great visibility on three TV shows.

And **Mother Lily** has signed him to a two-year film contract. Daddy Eddie says that one of Richard's first movies may be directed by **Maryo delos Reyes**.

So, Richard is clearly stardom-bound, and his growing horde of fans couldn't be happier. Daddy Eddie says he's given his son and show biz heir tips on how to do well in the movies, and we hope Richard will take them to heart, so he'll be in the business to stay—like his folks, **Anabelle Rama** and Eddie, and older sister **Ruffa**.

By the way, Eddie says that Richard wants to become an action star. Eventually, perhaps—but for now, his teenybopper fans want him to do young romances, comedies and dramas.

For the young comer with the boy-next-door looks, tough-guy action roles can wait.

When it comes to promising female starlets who are stardom-bound, the picture is not as clear. Logically, we can turn to the youth programs on TV as well as the soaps, and pluck the likeliest of the lot from among all those dozens of fresh, pretty faces. But, after doing that, our conclusions are short of conclusive.

Heart Evangelista is coming on strong as a Veejay, but her ultra-sweetness and pertness strikes some people as too cloying. On **Nora Aunor's** TV soap, **Carol Banawa** and **Desiree del Valle** have been given attention-calling roles, but they have yet to come on strong.

Nancy Castiglione is cute, but stars have to be more than that. **Ann Curtis'** freshness appears to have faded of late, and that's unfortunate. Maybe she can still recover some lost ground?

Among the even younger comers, **Camille Prats** is coming across like a teen **Aiko Melendez**, but recent rumors of precocious flirtations have soured some fans on her.

Like we said, the prospects of imminent stardom on the distaff side are indicative, but not conclusive: Let's hope that the picture clears up in this regard early this year!

Focus on Stanley Donen

RECENTLY, some students asked us to talk about film, and we were asked in the open forum that followed for our choice of the best director of movie musicals. Our answer: **Stanley Donen**.

Alas, nobody in the hall knew who he was. So much for our film education, folks. Maybe we should start from scratch and talk about **Georges Méliès**? Uh, on second thought, let's not.

In any case, Stanley Donen was a masterful director of musical films. If you can get hold of tapes of his movies, or catch them on the movie channels on cable TV, set your sights on his masterpieces, like "On the Town," "Singin' in the Rain" and "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers."

A dancer from age 10, Donen made his Broadway debut in 1940 as a chorus boy in "Pal Joey," starring **Gene Kelly**. The following year, he assisted Kelly on the choreography of "Best Foot Forward," and in 1943, worked on the film version of the musical.

POWER PLANT
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AGIMAT NI LOLO GP 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:10	LASTIKMAN GP 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40	MANO PO GP 11:40, 2:20, 5:00, 7:40, 10:20

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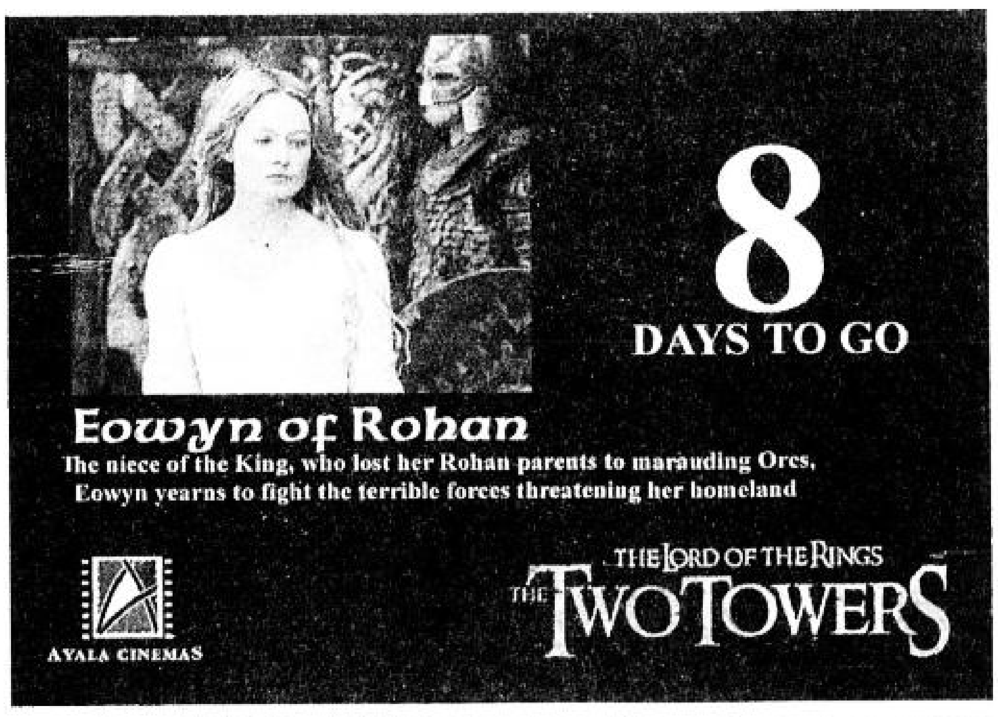
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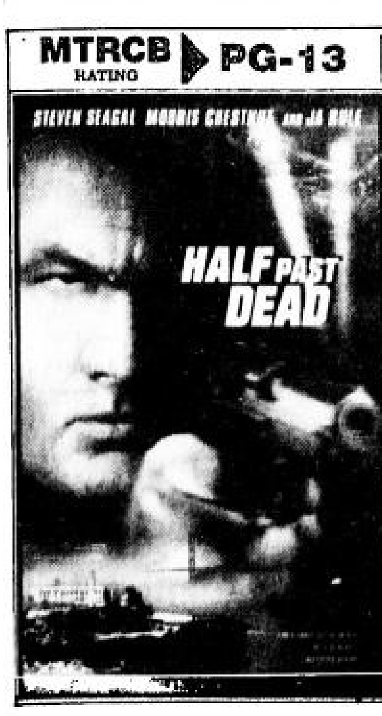
STEVEN SEAGAL MORRIS CHESTNUT and JA RULE
HALF PAST DEAD

Special New Year Presentation!
Steven Seagal back in Action

International action superstar Steven Seagal is back with a vengeance. This time he plays undercover FBI agent Sascha Petrosevitch in the brand-new non-stop, slam-bang action blockbuster from Columbia Pictures, "Half Past Dead."

The California Penal Authority has reopened Alcatraz, the most notorious prison in history. A disgruntled prison bureaucrat-turned-criminal mastermind heads a renegade commando team to infiltrate the high-tech fortress in order to force a death-row inmate to reveal the whereabouts of $200 million worth of gold.

Seagal teams with rap artist Ja Rule to rally the Alcatraz inmates to stop the invaders – before they murder the Supreme Court Justice, who is in The Rock to witness an execution.

The fast-paced, action-packed thriller also stars sexy Filipino Hollywood actress Nia Peeples as a deadly gun-firing, knife-throwing martial artist.

OPENS JANUARY 11

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7	
Ali 1	DEKADA '70
Ali 2	LASTIKMAN
Ali 3	MANO PO LOLA
Ali 4	AGIMAT
Ali 5	SPIRIT WARRIORS: THE SHORT CUT
Ali 6	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
Ali 7	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS	
Farmers 1	LASTIKMAN
Farmers 2	AGIMAT
ARANETA COLISEUM	
DEC 30-JAN 1-4	JOY TO THE WORLD CONCERT
JAN 11	ANAK LAUNCH
JAN 20 22 & 24	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2003
ELEPHANT WORLD	
JAN 2	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM
JAN. 3	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM
JAN 4	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	TWO TIMER/ SEX FILES
ODEON	LASTIKMAN
ODEON-2	PROSTI/ HIYAS NG PARAISO
ROBEN	SPIRIT WARRIORS
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	KILABOT AT KEMBOT, PERDIDAY
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET-2	AGIMAT NG LAWIN
QUEZON-1	LASTIKMAN
REMAR	LASTIKMAN
REMAR-2	AGIMAT
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
B	HULA MO, HULI KO
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA-2	REPUBLIKATE
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	HULA MO, HULI KO
CINEMA-2	HOME ALONG DA RIBER
CINEMA-3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	AGIMAT NI LOLO
CINEMA-6	MANO PO
CINEMA-7	SPIRIT WARRIOR 2
CINEMA-8	LAPU LAPU
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MANO PO
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	AGIMAT NI LOLO
CINEMA-12	SPIRIT WARRIOR 2
CINEMA-14	HOME ALONG DA RIBER
CINEMA-15	DEKADA 70
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	CHANGING LANES
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
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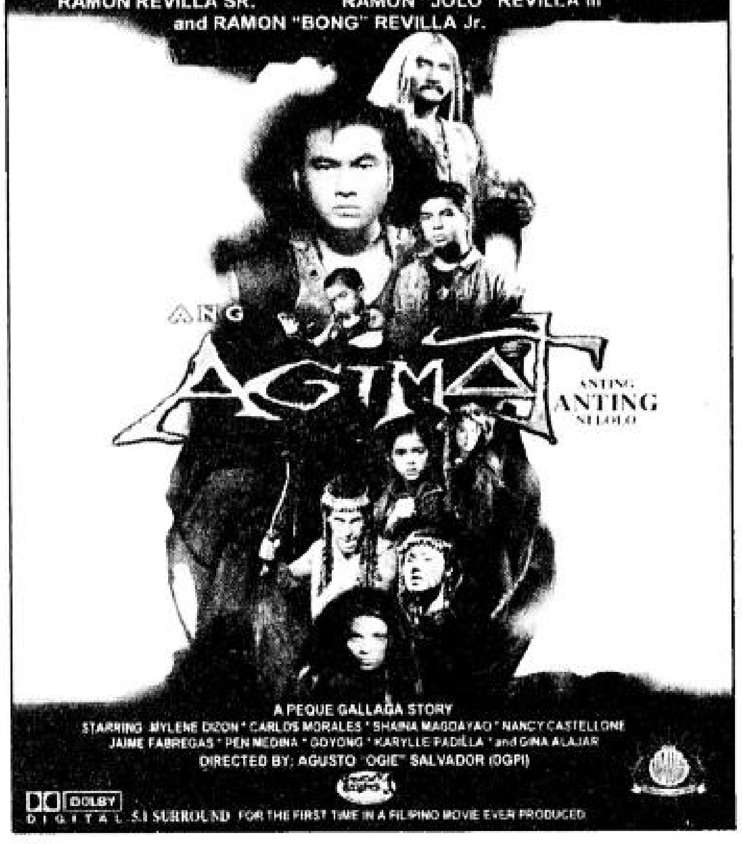

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3 ANG AGIMAT	3 DEKADA '70	Onestage	3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2	3 MANO PO
4 MANO PO	4 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2		4 ANG AGIMAT	4 LASTIKMAN
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3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	DEKADA '70
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4	HOME ALONG
5	LASTIKMAN

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2	HOME ALONG D RIVER
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	AGIMAT
5	LASTIKMAN
6	MANO PO

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2	AGIMAT

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1	HOME LASTIKMAN
2	AGIMAT
3	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
4	MANI PO

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(Manila) tel 734.8588

1	MANO PO
4	HULA MO HULI KO
5	AGIMAT
6	DEKADA '70
7	LASTIKMAN
8	HOME ALONG
9	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Gotesco Caloocan
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2	RESERVE

Gotesco Grand Central
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1	AGIMAT
2	LASTIKMAN
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	DEKADA '70
5	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
6	LASTIKMAN
7	MANO PO
8	HULI MO HULI KO
9	HOME ALONG

Gotesco Commonwealth
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1	MANO PO
2	AGIMAT
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5	LASTIKMAN

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4	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5	ALAMAT NG LAWIN

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Lords	AGIMAT
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1	AGIMAT
2	MANO PO
3	HOME ALONG D RIVER
4	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

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1	AGIMAT
2	MANO PO
3	LASTIKMAN
4	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5	ALAMAT NG LAWIN

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2	LASTIKMAN

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1	DEKADA '70
2	LASTIKMAN
3	MANO PO
4	AGIMAT
5	SPIRIT WARRIORS: THE SHORT CUT
6	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
7	HOME ALONE DA RIBER

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1	LASTIKMAN
2	AGIMAT

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1	LASTIKMAN
2	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
3	MANO PO

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1	MANO PO
2	LASTIKMAN
3	DEKADA '70
4	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

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3	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORCUT
4	LASTIKMAN

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2	MANO PO
3	AGIMAT
4	RESERVE

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2	LASTIKMAN
3	AGIMAT
4	MANO PO

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3	MANO PO

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4	LASTIKMAN

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3	LASTIKMAN
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5	HULI MO HULI KO

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2	LASTIKMAN
3	HOME ALONG D RIBER

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1	HOME ALONG D RIBER
2	LASTIKMAN
3	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Mega Center Mall
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1	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2	DEKADA '70
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	AGIMAT

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808

1	AGIMAT
2	HOME ALONG D RIBER

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2	LASTIKMAN
3	MANO PO

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1	MANO PO
2	AGIMAT
3	DEKADA '70
4	ALAMAT NG LAWIN

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1	AGIMAT
2	MANO PO
3	DEKADA '70
4	SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

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1	MANO PO
2	LASTIKMAN
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	AGIMAT

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2	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
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4	MANO PO
5	AGIMAT
6	LASTIKMAN
7	DEKADA '70
8	ALAMAT NG LAWIN

SM CENTERPOINT
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1	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
3	MANO PO
4	DEKADA '70
5	AGIMAT
6	HULA MO, HULI KO
7	LASTIKMAN
8	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
9	LASTIKMAN
10	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1	HULA MO, HULI KO
2	DEKADA '70
3	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
4	AGIMAT
5	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
6	LASTIKMAN
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
8	LASTIKMAN
9	MANO PO
10	LAPU LAPU
11	AGIMAT
12	ALAMAT NG LAWIN

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2	MANO PO
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	LASTIKMAN
5	DEKADA '70
6	AGIMAT
7	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
8	LAPU LAPU
9	LASTIKMAN
10	HULA MO, HULI KO
11	MANO PO
12	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM MEGAMALL
6331901 • 6329401

1	MANO PO
2	AGIMAT
3	LASTIKMAN
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
5	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6	LAPU LAPU
7	HULA MO, HULI KO
8	MANO PO
9	LASTIKMAN
10	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
11	DEKADA '70
12	HOME ALONE DA RIBER

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452

1	HULA MO, HULI KO
2	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	DEKADA '70
5	MANO PO
6	LASTIKMAN
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
8	AGIMAT

SM SOUTHMALL
8066888

1	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
2	DEKADA '70
3	AGIMAT
4	LASTIKMAN
5	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6	HULA MO, HULI KO
7	MANO PO
8	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
9	LASTIKMAN
10	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM CITY CEBU
2313876

1	MANO PO
2	AGIMAT
3	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
4	DEKADA '70
5	LASTIKMAN
6	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
7	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8	MANO PO

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422

1	DEKADA '70
2	CLOSED
3	AGIMAT
4	MANO PO
5	LASTIKMAN
6	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
7	CLOSED
8	HOME ALONE DA RIBER

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015

1	LASTIKMAN
2	AGIMAT
3	MANO PO
4	DEKADA '70
5	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
6	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975

1	AGIMAT
2	LASTIKMAN
3	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
4	MANO PO

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2	LASTIKMAN
3	MANO PO
4	AGIMAT

SM CITY DAVAO
2976998

1	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3	MANO PO
4	DEKADA '70
5	LASTIKMAN
6	AGIMAT

SM BICUTAN

1	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2	MANO PO
3	LASTIKMAN
4	AGIMAT

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

1	AGIMAT
2	DEKADA '70
3	MANO PO
4	HOME ALONE DA RIBER

THE PODIUM CINEMA
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1	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2 1:00 FS/1:30 MF/3:40/5:50/8:00/ 9:40 LFS/10:10 LMF/11:50 END
2	MANO PO 11:00 FS/11:20 MF/2:00/4:40/7:20/9:35 LFS/10:00 LMF/12:15 END

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2	LASTIKMAN
3	MANO PO
4	AGIMAT
5	SPIRIT WARRIOR
6	DEKADA '70
7	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
9	DEKADA '70
10	HULA MO HULI KO

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2	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
3	DEKADA '70
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
6	ANG AGIMAT
7	LASTIKMAN

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1	AGIMAT
2	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3	LASTIKMAN
4	DEKADA '70
5	HULA MO HULI KO
6	MANO PO
7	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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1	AGIMAT
2	DEKADA '70
3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4	HULA MO HULI KO
5	MANO PO
6	LASTIKMAN
7	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
8	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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1	MANO PO
2	LASTIKMAN
3	AGIMAT
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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1	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
2	MANO PO
3	DEKADA '70
4	AGIMAT
5	LASTIKMAN
6	SPIRIT WARRIORS

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1	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
2	MANO PO
3	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	LASTIKMAN
5	DEKADA '70
6	HOME ALONE DA RIBER

Sta. Rosa Laguna

1	LASTIKMAN
2	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	AGIMAT
5	MANO PO

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1	LIKE MIKE
2	DEKADA 70
3	LASTIKMAN
4	MANO PO
5	SPIRIT WARRIOR
6	AGIMAT

Iloilo
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1	AGIMAT
2	LASTIKMAN
3	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	DEKADA '70
5	HOME ALONG THE RIBER
6	MANO PO

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SHRINKING MARKET SHARE

Industries seen losing war vs smuggling

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FILIPINO consumers were likely to have bought smuggled items during their recent Christmas shopping spree, according to the Federation of Philippine Industries.

FPI chair Meneleo J. Carlos Jr. said that up to 80 percent of all consumer goods and 50 percent of industrial goods in the local market have been illegally slipped into the country's major ports.

Carlos said these goods were most likely smuggled into the country through Manila, Cebu, Subic, Cagayan de Oro, Davao and Zamboanga. He said the growing magnitude of smuggling showed that local industries have been losing the war against smuggling despite government efforts to crackdown on this illicit trade.

"Evidence shows that smuggling continues and it is bleeding the economy and society dry," Carlos said.

Carlos said that smuggling not only deprived legitimate industries of market share but that it also took away billions of pesos in potential customs duties that could have been used to narrow down the budget deficit which had ballooned to P200 billion in the first 11 months last year.

Aside from urging more vigilance on the part of the government to stop smuggling, Carlos suggested several policy measures aimed directly at plugging specific channels used in smuggling.

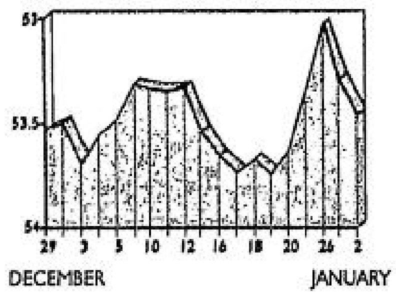
Carlos said the government should close down customs bonded trading warehouses and replace them with industry-specific bonded trading warehouses that would be strictly accredited and monitored.

The FPI said CBWs had become one of the biggest smuggling gateways in the country because of the government's inability to monitor the

INDUSTRIES/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



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As of 5 p.m., Dec. 27, 2003

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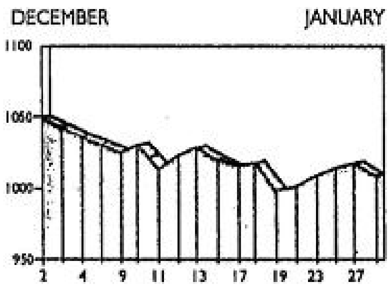
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 2, 2003

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Market down on Iraq fears

STOCKS closed lower yesterday, the first trading day of 2003, as threats of war in the Middle East dashed bits of optimism that followed President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision not to seek a new term in the 2004 elections.

Ms Macapagal made her surprise announcement on Monday when the market was closed for a national holiday.

She removed herself from the presidential race, citing the negative effects of political infighting in the country, and vowed to focus on reviving the economy.

MARKET/ B2

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- Benito Dellosa, *Laguna*

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NAIA-3 OPENING

Gov't, Piatco hold informal talks

By Abigail L. Ho

EVEN while some legal issues have yet to be settled, the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. (Piatco) is holding "informal talks" with the government in a move to open the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3) at the soonest possible time.

In an interview yesterday, Piatco vice president for public affairs Moises Tolentino Jr. disclosed that both the Naia 3 builder and the government had taken steps to amicably settle their differences before facing each other for arbitration by Singapore-based International Chamber of Commerce.

"There are informal talks going on right now. Both parties recognize that we have to talk but we agreed that we should keep all discussions to ourselves and not let any third party in. When we come up with an agreement, then we'll make an announcement to the public together," he told the INQUIRER.

Involved in these talks are Piatco officials, the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) and the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA). He, however, declined to name the Piatco officials involved in the talks.

Tolentino noted that both Piatco and the government were working towards the resolution of issues surrounding the new terminal as it was very important that the terminal open as soon as possible.

The Department of Tourism has declared 2003 as "Wow Philippines" year in its bid to promote the country as a prime tourist destination in Asia.

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon has said that the new terminal will be a big plus in promoting tourism in the country.

Meanwhile, Tolentino said the resolution of legal issues surrounding the new terminal was also key to Piatco's being able to pay its obligations to its Japanese contractor Takenaka and quality assurance inspector (QAI) Japan Airport Consultants Inc. (Jaci).

He explained that with the legality of the contract in question, Piatco could not just make payments to any of the entities that rendered services during the building of the terminal.

"The QAI is being paid 50-50 by both the government and Piatco so there should be concurrence from both the DOTC and the MIAA. Right now, everything is in limbo because the government is saying that the original agreement and the Arca amended and restated concession agreement) are null and void," he said. "If the government continues to take that position, how can we reconcile that position with the obligation to the QAI?"

But MIAA general manager Edgardo Manda said Piatco was merely using the legal issues it was facing as a scapegoat.

He explained that the Naia 3 builder's obligations to Takenaka and Jaci were there even before the legal issues were raised by the government late last year.

"Piatco is just using the legal issues. Its contract with Jaci has been pending long before the legal issues were raised. If Piatco really wanted to pay Jaci, then it should have just signed the required papers a long time ago. If they really want to, they can do that," he said in a separate interview.

He added that Piatco had been misleading the public by saying that the Naia 3 was ready for commercial operation as it still had some technical problems that needed to be resolved.

Creditors back Glasgow offer

CREDITORS of Glasgow Credit and Collection Services Inc. have expressed support for an offer of settlement submitted by the firm to the Securities and Exchange Commission proposing the voluntary and permanent winding up of its operations after substantially paying its obligations.

Glasgow president Manuel Roldan Jr. said the SEC had approved the offer "in principle." Earlier, the SEC asked the Anti-money Laundering Council to unfreeze the funds of Glasgow in five banks, paving the way for the payment of close to P700 million to its creditors. Roldan said the pay out is set to be completed by this month.

Glasgow became the first company that have been issued a cease-and-desist order by the SEC to pay back its creditors. The CDO was issued in July this year following unverified allegations that the firm might have been involved in the sale of securities which was not allowed under the terms of its incorporation.

Glasgow, however, clarified that the contracts it executed with its creditors were not securities but loan documents that did not assume the nature of an investment.

Glasgow creditors led by Renzy Flores said the offer to settle "would avert further unnecessary litigation that would not benefit us". Glasgow creditors earlier cited the SEC move to unfreeze the company's funds which allowed for the payment of the firm's loans.

TRADERS talk on the phone at the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, the first trading day of the year. REUTERS

Market down on Iraq fears

From page B1

Her announcement came amid growing concerns among businessmen about the country's economic prospects. "The market overhangs regarding the budget deficit and tension in the Middle East still remains. Investors were also sidelined as they digested news that the President will not seek reelection in 2004," said BPI Securities analyst Roberto Cano.

The main index, which lost 12.81 percent of its value in 2002, dropped 9.77 points or 0.96 percent to end at 1,008.64 points. Volume was thin at P113.64 million.

In the broader market, there were 25 losers, nine gainers and 21 stocks unchanged.

"Although it's a surprise revelation, most took this (Arroyo's decision) with a grain of salt. Investors have already factored in that political environment in the Philippines is very intriguing and full of surprises," said A&A Securities research head Astro del Castillo.

"The statement of the President could be different a week from now, two weeks from now, six months from now. We'd rather stay on the sidelines, knowing that there will be more intrigues coming her way," said Del Castillo. *Reuters*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Thursday, January 2, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	18	18	17.75	17.75	13,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	206,700
Citystate Savings Bank	15	15	15	15	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	17,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31.5	31.5	30.5	31	97,000
Phil. Savings Bank	29	29	27	26.5	16,900
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	20,000
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	16	16.5	16	16.5	36,100
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1,040,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	447.5	447.5	445	447.5	24,190
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	500,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	500,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	20,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	265	270	265	267.5	74,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.01	10,700,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	8.2	8.4	8.2	8.3	36,000
Manila Electric Co. B	9.1	9.5	9	9	811,000
Petron Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.52	1.54	168,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	110,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	106,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.42	2.42	2.4	2.4	522,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	90,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.5	18.25	18.5	1,021,400
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	35	35	35	35	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	59.5	59.5	59	59	45,500
San Miguel Corp. B	65.5	65.5	65	65	61,600
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	4.3	4.3	4.25	4.25	148,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.11	0.115	0.11	0.115	310,000
First Phil Hldgs. Corp.	8.2	8.4	8.2	8.2	117,000
Ionics Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	140,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	200,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	400,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.16	1,700,000
Music Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.09	0.09	500,000
Philtread Holdings Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	135,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	500,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	397,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	50,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.26	0.29	0.26	0.29	250,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	16	16	16	16	918,600
Jollibee Warrants	18	18	17.5	17.5	5,200
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.55	4.55	4.45	4.45	2,336,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	710,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	290,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	40,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4.7	4.7	4.65	4.65	899,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	10,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't.	1.3	1.32	1.2	1.2	90,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	140,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	160,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	500,000

DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Bank of Communications furnished the Philippine Stock Exchange a copy of its amended SEC Form 17-Q/Quarterly Report for the quarter that ended Sept. 30, 2002.

***

NEGROS Navigation Co. Inc. said its decision to withdraw its membership in the Domestic Shipowners Association was due to differences in business philosophies among other partners toward attaining the common objectives of the domestic shipping industry.

***

IN LINE with its stock repurchase program, La Tondeña Distillers Inc. bought 186,000 shares on Dec. 27 bringing to 16,301,341 the total number of outstanding shares it has bought back.

***

QUEEN Bee Resources Corp. bought 226,200 shares of Jollibee Foods Corp. on Dec. 27 as part of the bonus warrants to be issued to all warrant holders as of record date Dec. 13. This brought the total number of shares it repurchased to 3,101,502 JFC shares.

***

THE FOLLOWING were elected officers of Wellex Industries Inc.: Lamberto Un Ocampo, chair; Dr. Rafael Sison, vice chair; Elvira Ting, president; lawyer Arthur Ponsaran, treasurer, and lawyer Joaquin Obieta, corporate secretary.

***

INTERPHIL Laboratories Inc. bought 210,000 ILI shares and 555,000 ILIB shares on Dec. 27 in line with its share buy-back program.

***

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. said that for the period Dec. 13 to 27, 279,895 shares have been exercised and fully paid for under its stock option plan. This brought the number of treasury shares reserved and allotted for this plan to 14,879,626. ***Compiled by Armin Adina, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

Jan. 02, 2003

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	0.952925	1.000000	53.254000
Japan	Yen	0.008028	0.008425	0.448700
United Kingdom	Pound	1.535354	1.611200	85.802800
Hongkong	Dollar	0.122196	0.128233	6.828900
Switzerland	Franc	0.689676	0.723746	38.542400
Canada	Dollar	0.605801	0.635728	33.855100
Singapore	Dollar	0.549680	0.576834	30.718700
Australia	Dollar	0.536588	0.563095	29.987100
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.527922	2.652801	141.272300
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.254114	0.266667	14.201100
Brunei	Dollar	0.546622	0.573625	30.547800
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000107	0.000112	0.006000
Thailand	Baht	0.022136	0.023229	1.237000
UAE	Dirham	0.259469	0.272287	14.500400
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.049400	55.884700
Argentina	Peso	0.284455	0.298507	15.896700
Brazil	REAL	0.269568	0.282885	15.064800
Denmark	Kroner	0.134366	0.141004	7.509000
India	Rupee	0.019894	0.020877	1.111800
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.250803	0.263193	14.016100
Mexico	New Peso	0.092070	0.096618	5.145300
New Zealand	Dollar	0.499227	0.523889	27.899200
Norway	Kroner	0.137263	0.144044	7.670900
Pakistan	Rupee	0.016402	0.017212	0.916600
South Africa	Rand	0.111506	0.117014	6.231500
Korea	Won	0.000803	0.000843	0.044900
Sweden	Kroner	0.109450	0.114857	6.116600
Syria	Pound	0.018503	0.019417	1.034000
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.027541	0.028902	1.539100
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000687	0.000721	0.038400

SEC steps up compliance monitoring drive

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission will intensify its compliance monitoring this year to ensure that registered companies comply with the country's securities laws and the corporate watchdog's rules and regulations.

"We will aggressively monitor compliance with existing circulars, impose appropriate sanctions against errant firms or individuals, and promulgate new rules when necessary," the SEC said in its indicative list of priorities for 2003.

In line with this, the SEC said it would implement the Compliance Monitoring and Evaluation System, an automated facility to monitor the compliance of registered entities with government laws and regulations.

The CMES will allow the online analytical processing of the financial performance of registered entities, as well as provide a mechanism to monitor enforcement of sanctions on non-complying companies.

The SEC said it would also strengthen its on-site compliance audits and investigations to verify suspected or alleged violations of SEC rules and regulations.

"Among others, we will continue to conduct thematic audits and implement joint SEC-BSP and SEC-PSE audits," the SEC said.

The agency said it would likewise intensify the monitoring of inactive corporations. As in the past, lists of delinquent corporations will be published in newspapers of general circulation. The government regulator will revoke the license of inactive corporations for continued non-compliance.

The SEC will focus particularly on the monitoring of compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance, Memorandum Circular No. 5 2002 and other related circulars. It will undertake the following:

- Design a self-assessment system and disclosure process to be used by companies covered by the circulars
- Conduct on-site evaluation f actual corporate governance practices vis-à-vis international best practices and the provisions of the Code of Corporate Governance
- Formulate additional guidelines for proper implementation of corporate governance principles.

Banks await decision on bill extending VAT exemption

BORROWERS and other bank customers will soon have to pay 10 percent more in interest payments or fees unless Congress will pass a bill deferring the imposition of value-added-tax on financial institutions.

"Financial institutions are in a quandary on what to do, whether or not to slap a VAT on its customers because the bill providing for the deferral has yet to be approved," Bankers Association of the Philippines executive director Leonilo Coronel said. "Clients should be forewarned that the banks might start charging VAT."

The direct impact of the VAT is to raise the cost of borrowing by 10 percent. For example, a borrower who pays 10 percent interest per year on a loan will now have to pay 11 percent per year once the VAT is imposed.

"It's really going to be the consumers who will be burdened by it," Coronel pointed out.

A VAT reprieve earlier granted to financial institutions expired at the end of 2002, compelling banks to start imposing VAT on their transactions with customers. However, banks are reluctant to do so because it would take six months to make adjustments in their computer systems for VAT collections.

In the meantime, Congress could pass the bill for the retroactive deferment of the tax like what it did two years ago.

The proposed further deferment of the VAT imposition on both financial institutions and professionals is contained in one bill but Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho recently said he would ask President Macapagal-Arroyo to veto the bill if it would be passed by Congress as he was strongly opposed to the exemption accorded to professionals.

The finance department earlier warned that another VAT exemption on professionals would lead to some P8.5 billion in foregone revenue. The national government badly needs to increase revenue collection to contain its budget deficit or face a possible downgrade of its credit ratings.

The President, however, may decide to use her power to veto revenue or tax bills line by line and thereby, allow the deferment of the VAT on financial institutions but not on professionals.

The Department of Finance has recommended to Congress the approval of the gross receipts tax of 5 percent to be imposed on financial institutions in lieu of the VAT.

In case the bill is vetoed in full, Coronel said banks were still not clear on how to implement the tax system. He said there were still many sticky issues on the implementation of the VAT.

"Since banks offer a service, what is the input tax? How do you compute a VAT on foreign exchange, is it on net income or gross?" he said. *Elena R. Torrijos*

Singapore firm expanding RP operations

TUNGALOY Seimitsu (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. is expanding its wear resistant tool facility at the Calamba Industrial Park II special economic zone to meet growing demand from multinational semiconductor and electronic companies operating in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority reported that Tungaloy Seimitsu Philippines Inc. would spend P57.052 million to increase the capacity of its Calamba factory.

Tungaloy Seimitsu is expected to generate P106 million in annual export revenues and 34 new jobs. The company is a main supplier of wear resistant tools to Intel Philippines, Amkor Technology, and Philips Semiconductors.

Aside from selling to other Peza-registered firms, Tungaloy Seimitsu expects to ship out part of its incremental output to Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Tungaloy Seimitsu was established in Singapore in 1988 as a manufacturer of carbide punch and dies. It is a subsidiary of Toshiba Tungaloy Co. Ltd. of Japan, one of the world's leading developer and distributor of innovative cutting tool solutions for a variety of applications.

Toshiba was the first to make cemented tungsten carbide alloy in Japan in 1927 which it called Tungaloy. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Industries seen losing . . .

From page B1

flow of goods going in and out of these special depots considering the variety of goods in these warehouses and the large number of CBWs in the country (708 with more than half inactive). All goods going through CBWs are duty-free imports because exporters use these goods as inputs for their export shipments. However, some of the imported goods are not re-exported but diverted to the domestic market.

Carlos said the government should also tighten its monitoring of economic zone operations to ensure that locators did not divert their tax and duty-free imports to the local market.

Carlos said the government could help turn the tide against smuggling if only it prosecuted the perpetrators and confiscate the surety bonds until offenders have made their restitution.

Another area that the FPI wanted the government to monitor closely is foreign fund transfers especially those involving remittances of overseas workers..

Singapore avoids recession but sees tough 2003

SINGAPORE—Singapore's economy grew an annualized 0.1 percent in the fourth quarter, narrowly escaping recession, the government's advance estimate showed on Thursday, as the central bank defied pressure to loosen monetary policy.

The rise in gross domestic product—the broadest measure of the economy—follows a steep 9.9-percent contraction the previous quarter and reflects a burst of export-driven strength in manufacturing.

"The global economy is weak but the outlook is much less negative than at this time last year," said James Malcolm, a currency strategist at JP Morgan Chase. "So there didn't seem to be any strong rationale to shift to an easing bias."

The economy expanded 2.6 percent in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, generating full-year growth of 2.2 percent for 2002, the Ministry of Trade and Industry said in an advance estimate of GDP based on data from October and November.

The 2.2-percent full-year growth figure was announced on Tuesday by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in his annual New Year's address. He has forecast 2- to 5-percent growth for 2003.

"The GDP numbers basically confirm the view that there's a softening in the fourth quarter. In the next three to six months, the situation will still be quite soft and any warming up would be in the second half," said DBS Bank economist Kaan Quan Hon.

Services producing industries grew 2.2 percent in the fourth quarter, manufacturing expanded 6.7 percent and construction fell 10 percent, the ministry said.

"The only reason we are marginally in the clear is that they gave an estimate for December manufacturing, which was stronger than expected," said Song Seng Wun, economist with GK Goh.

Singapore pulled out of its worst recession since 1964 in the second quarter, but signs of growth in the city-state's key electronics exports and manufacturing industries are patchy while the threat of a Middle East war has dampened recovery hopes.

"Looking ahead, the potential conflict in Iraq poses near-term downside risks to growth," the Monetary Authority of Singapore said in a statement. *Reuters*

Hong Kong economy shrinks

HONG KONG—Hong Kong's economy contracted for the fifth straight month in December, as output and demand continued to fall, NTC Research said on Thursday.

The UK-based research firm said in its monthly purchasing managers' index survey that the pace of decline had accelerated during the month.

The Hong Kong PMI, which gives an overall view of local business activities, slipped to 49 from 49.7 in November. A figure above 50 indicates economic expansion.

"However, despite falling during the latest month, the index level was indicative of only a marginal worsening in economic conditions," NTC Research said.

Output, order books, employment and prices charged all contracted in December.

In recent years, Hong Kong has been ravaged by recession, deflation and plunging property prices. *Reuters*

Thailand to repay IMF loans early

BANGKOK—Thailand said Thursday it would repay early the foreign loans it borrowed to ride out the 1997-98 economic crisis, a move analysts saw as a symbolic gesture having little impact on the baht currency.

Finance Minister Somkid Jatusripitak told reporters the Cabinet approved a plan to repay early the roughly $4.8 billion in outstanding loans Thailand took from the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral agencies.

Somkid said the loans would be paid back in three installments over the next six months from late January.

Each installment would be about $1.6 billion, he said.

"We are confident the early repayment is good and appropriate. The Thai economy is sufficiently strong and the gradual payment should not have any impact on the baht," Somkid told reporters. *Reuters*

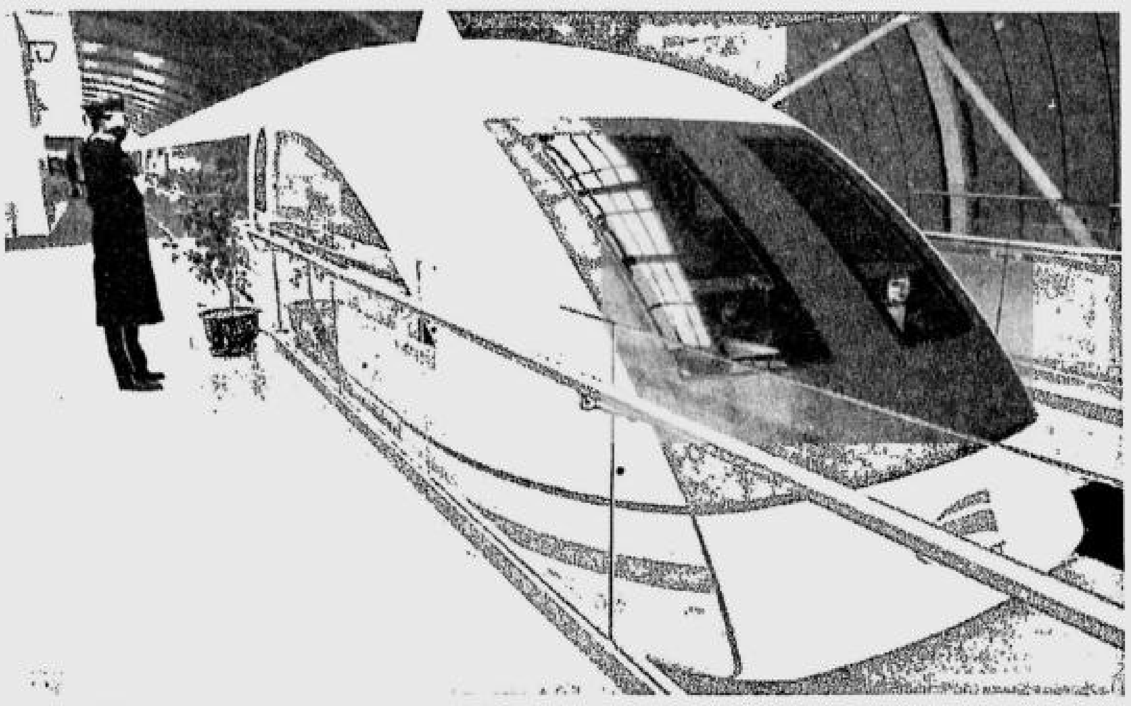
Nissan enters full-size pickup mart

DETROIT—Nissan Motor Co. could have introduced its first full-size pickup at any number of upcoming auto shows around the world.

In fact, there's one in its own backyard, the Tokyo Auto Salon, in mid-January.

But the Japanese automaker had its eye on another backyard, that of the traditional Big Three automakers, when it chose next week's North American International Auto Show for the debut.

Ford, Chevrolet, GMC and Dodge have long dominated the large pickup market, but officials at Nissan, coming off a strong turnaround year, say they plan to make a statement when they unveil their new truck in Detroit. *AP*



A CHINESE security officer salutes the world's first passenger Transrapid Maglev high speed train as it leaves a station in Shanghai. REUTERS

Shanghai maglev train a smooth ride

SHANGHAI, China—You'd barely know you were moving if it weren't for the blurred farm houses and electric poles hurtling past the window.

It's not until the digital speedometer of the world's first commercial magnetic-levitation train breaks 400 kph—faster than an Indy 500 race car—that any vibrations are noticeable.

It's just as the voice on the loudspeaker said to passengers as they boarded: "You will be flying without wings."

That's how it feels to ride the "maglev," unveiled to the Chinese public Wednesday as Shanghai's newest prestige project, a $1.2-billion German-built high-speed airport shuttle that uses the world's most advanced rail technology.

While hefty construction and upkeep costs raise doubts whether the maglev shuttle will ever make money, that may not even matter—either for its builders or for the city.

The German consortium of companies that supplied the trains and invested decades and billions of dollars developing the technology appears happy just to have a working version to show customers elsewhere. This includes the United States, where the technology is being considered in Los Angeles and the busy Boston-Philadelphia corridor.

Shanghai wants a showpiece project to bolster its ambitions to become a world-class financial and business center.

It also appears increasingly likely the 31-km link between Shanghai's skyscraper-studded Pudong financial district and its three-year-old international airport is just a test run for much larger maglev lines planned in China.

On Tuesday, after joining Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji for the shuttle's maiden voyage, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder told reporters China would extend the line hundreds of kilometers to the eastern cities of Hangzhou and Nanjing. There are also proposals for a maglev between Beijing and the nearby port of Tianjin.

"The airport shuttle is just a good start, but the maglev's future is in transportation between relatively close cities, those too far for a quick trip by conventional trains but too close for flying," said Wei Qingchao, an engineering professor. *AP*

Asia-Pacific infotech market to grow 11%

SINGAPORE—The Asia-Pacific information technology and telecommunications markets are projected to expand 11 percent this year, with Indian companies emerging as key players, an industry report said Thursday.

The IT market in the region, excluding Japan, should recover gradually in 2003, driven by infrastructure upgrades to rise 11 percent on the year to $81 billion, International Data Corp. (IDC) said.

Hardware segments like personal computers, low and middle-range servers and local area networks are expected to rebound from weak demand in 2002, IDC said in its projections for the year.

Despite a global meltdown, the region's telecommunications market is expected to also grow by 11 percent to $137 billion, it said.

"The telecommunications services industry in the region will continue its growth momentum driven by deregulation and pent-up demand in the developing countries," said Piyush Singh, managing director at IDC Asia-Pacific.

"Broadband will continue to proliferate, driven by lower prices, competition and the exploding online gaming phenomenon in the region."

Beyond 2003, the industry "will enter a new decade of growth driven by personal intelligent gadgets, pervasive connectivity, mobility, seamless information exchange and bio-informatics," he said.

He also said top Indian services companies like TCS, Infosys, Wipro and Satyam Computer Services will ride the global cost-cutting wave to become key industry players.

The network storage market will cross the one-billion dollar threshold and demand for "converged handheld devices" resulting from the merger of the handset and personal digital assistants should also expand.

"By the end of the year, digital images captured per day by scanners, cameras and devices will surpass the number of images captured on film, but the industry will still center on film," IDC said.

Security solutions will remain in demand due to the continuing threat of terrorism and viruses.

The region will also cross key milestones this year. *AFP*

PRULINK	PRU LIFE U.K.	
VARIABLE LIFE	Current Week December 24, 2002	Last Week December 17, 2002
Prulink Bond Fund	1.03416	1.03416
Prulink Managed Fund	1.00151	1.00151

* Note: PRULINK Funds were launched last September 18, 2002

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Manulife Philippines welcomes CMG Life's policyholders to the Manulife family!

Effective 1 January 2003, by virtue of the Assumption Reinsurance Agreement executed between THE MANUFACTURERS LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY (PHILS.) INC. (Manulife Philippines) and CMG LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, INC. (CMG Life), duly approved by the Insurance Commission, Manulife Philippines agrees to assume all in-force life insurance policies previously issued by CMG Life, under their terms and conditions.

Should you have any questions, please contact us at:
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- Phone : (632) 636-2721
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BUSINESS*Friday*

Business Features Editor **Margie Quimpo-Espino**

RP shines bright in 2002 int'l ad awards

By Roger Pe
Contributor

WHEN you build your brands with ads that win people's hearts and minds, you win sales, respect and, bonuses in between. Let's take a look at some of our ads that traveled abroad and brought home something to smile about.

The Philippines finally broke into the Asia Pacific Advertising Festival's elite circle of medal winners when Leo Burnett romped off with a gold for McDonald's "Lolo" as well as a bronze for Bengay's "Japanese" television commercials. Both were the biggest argument that a commercial hit can also be a critical success.

BBDO-Guerrero/Ortega brought home another bronze for Visa's "Dining Out" TV campaign while at the same time put two locally-acclaimed ads in the shortlist: Adidas' "Construction" and "Fence." Ogilvy & Mather was the other Philippine finalist with its The Economist's "No Middleground" outdoor entry.

Billed as the Cannes of Asia, the Asia Adfest, as it is fondly called, is held annually in Thailand's resort city of Pattaya where the continent's creative stars and semi-celebs converge to showcase their best work.

In the equally prestigious and long-running Asian Advertising Awards, organized by Asia's bimonthly trade magazine Media, the Philippines made its presence felt by winning a rare Spike (symbol of Asian excellence), five excellence certificates (four by BBDO-Guerrero/Ortega for Visa's "Dining Out" in craft categories, and one by McCann-Erickson for Modess' "Filo") and nine finalist citations for TBWA-Santiago, Mangada and Puno, DDB Philippines, Leo Burnett, BBDO, Jimenez and Aspac.

Only three Philippines agencies have won the Asian Spike in the 16-year history of the awards show: Ogilvy & Mather, Lowe Worldwide (then Lintas) and BBDO.

The year 2002 saw the Philippines surpassed its best ever performance in the Clio. BBDO won two silvers and one bronze for Visa's "Dining Out" and Ogilvy & Mather snatched another silver for The Economist's/Manila Mandarin "Key" collateral entry.

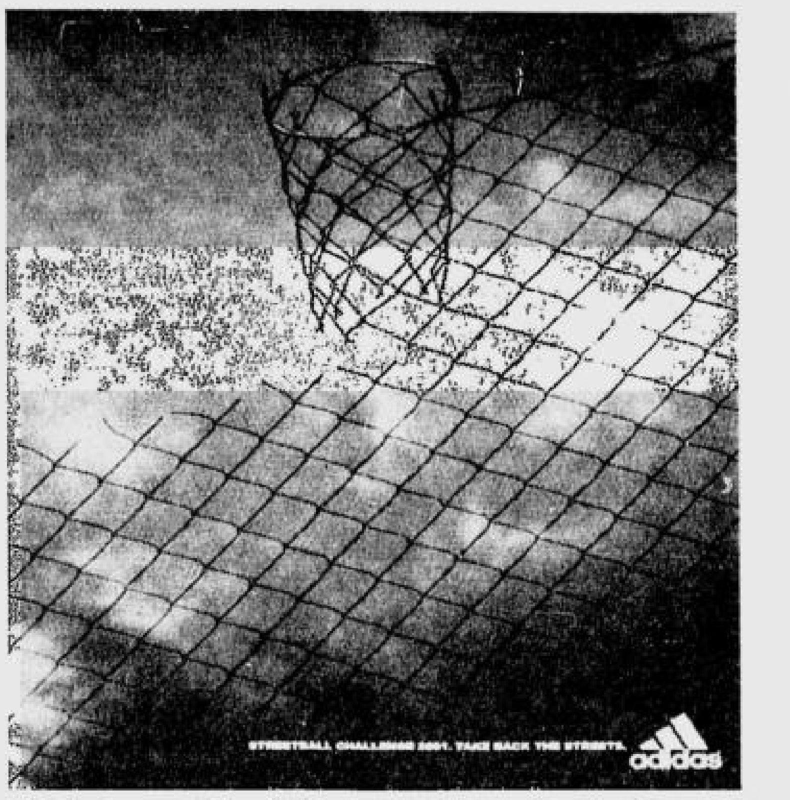
Together with Adidas' "Fence" by BBDO and Ace-Saatchi & Saatchi's two print finalists, the haul broke the country's standing record in the world's biggest awards show. (The Philippines has never won a Clio for almost 40 years until in 1997 when O&M brought home two bronzes for Anvil's "Critics" and Pepsi's "Say No To Coke").

As competition gets tougher every year in Cannes, the Olympics of advertising, the country lowered its harvest this year with only three entries surfacing as finalists: O&M's "No Middleground" and "Key" for The Economist and DDB Philippines' TV entry for Dole tomato sauce. The ad festival along Cote d' Azur in the French Riviera will be celebrating its 50 year anniversary in 2003.

In London International Advertising Awards, BBDO-Guerrero/Ortega's "Dining Out" television commercial for Visa pocketed a gold for sound design. The agency had previously won 2 golds in the same ad festival ("Bembol" a print ad for the agency's self-promotion campaign and "Electric Fan," a print campaign for Bayfresh aerosol).

Nine other Philippine agencies landed as finalists this year: McCann-Erickson, J. Walter Thompson, Lowe Worldwide, DDB Philippines, Ace-Saatchi & Saatchi, Campaigns and Grey,BBDO-Guerrero, TBWA-SMP and Leo Burnett.

TBWA-Santiago, Mangada and Puno won a silver for its Couples for Christ "Nurse" radio campaign in this year's New York Festivals. Ace-Saatchi & Saatchi was rewarded with a bronze for its "Pain" outdoor poster for Philippine Cancer Society. DDB Philippines got two finalist citations and McCann-Erickson, Jimenez D'Arcy, DY&R had one each.



BBDO-Guerrero/Ortega's Fence ad of Adidas was an award contender.

Girl drops tinseltown; turns to selling high-end Swiss timepieces

ROLEX
ROLEX

OWNER-MANAGER Gigi Asok-Bambroffe

THE SHOP is inconspicuously located in one of the posh hotels in the country. It is not so big but it is a showcase for quality timepieces.

"We call it "pre-owned" (short for previously-owned) since they don't look like "second hand". More often than not, people would mistake our watches as "brand new" until they ask for the price—*"Bakit mas mura?"* (Why is it much cheaper?) is the most frequently asked question by customers. Only then do they realize it is not brand new," says owner-manager Gigi Asok-Bambroffe.

Located at the Ground Floor of Hyatt Regency Manila along Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Watch Exchange houses an array of second hand, original, Swiss watches such as Rolex, Cartier, Omega, Piaget, Bulgari, Patek Philippe, and many others.

The watches undergo a thorough check-up, service and polish and are given up to two years free service guarantee. It's ideal for people who need to save money and yet get to buy the watch they want. The possibility of being able to buy two watches for the price of one can be an added bonus. Most often, pleased with how much savings they can make, husbands who window shop end up buying not only for themselves but also for their wives and kids, too.

Manila Watch is also involved in the buying and pawning of Swiss watches. The shop also accepts repairs and polishing or buffing of any watch.

For those who want to change or upgrade their watches, they also allow you to trade-in your old watch for another one.

Asok-Bambroffe has been in the business of buying and selling pre-owned, high-end quality Swiss since 1997. A Mass Communication graduate major in Film and Audio-Visual Communication from U.P. Diliman, getting in the watch business seemed far off.

After all, this "star struck" provincial lass from Siquijor wanted nothing else before but to work in the glittering life of tinseltown. After five years of working as Associate Producer in Regal Films and personal assistant to the then Presidential daughter Kris Aquino, Gigi says she had enough memories of showbiz to last her a lifetime. It was then that her boyfriend, now husband Tony, convinced her to get into the watch business, an idea he got from similar businesses he had seen abroad. Left with the choice to follow him abroad or stay here, the family-oriented Gi wanted to stay. So, Tony challenged her that if she could make a success of the business, he would pack his bags and join her here. Armed with no proper business training and experience, Gigi took up the challenge with sheer determination and lots of guts. She started advertising in Buy and Sell and the Classified Ads for pre-owned high quality Swiss watches and meeting clients in hotel lobbies and restaurants.

Then she got a small stall in Ali Mall, in Cubao which proved to be successful. This then prompted her to look for a larger, safer, more prestigious shop. She found the ideal place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and has since opened another branch at the 2nd level of Robinsons Galleria in Ortigas Center.

Five years later, Tony joined her and they have since been blessed with three cute kids.

"It was a matter of doing the right thing in the right place at the right time. Being in this business demands a lot of time and dedication since I choose to be on top of things to make sure that everything is in order especially on checking the value and quality of the watches," Gigi says.

"Before I entered into this business, I swore I'd never spend more than P20,000 on a single watch. Only now do I understand that for people who have extra cash to spare, it's not pure luxury. It's actually a wise investment. These high-quality Swiss timepieces not only give its owners the pride and joy of wearing top end watches, they actually increase in value through time and can be passed on to the next generation," Gigi adds.

Due to the devaluation of the peso and the high exchange rate of the dollar, the brand new prices of these watches have skyrocketed over recent years.

Judgment Day

TAX-FILES

By Luis Jose P. Ferrer
SGV & Co.

THE day has come.

For taxpayers, who have not been properly declaring their sales and income, it is time to face the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and answer for one's "sins."

Third party information which before were not readily available to the BIR and were well-kept trade secrets of seasoned tax examiners are now at the fingertips of the tax authorities.

Computerized processing and matching of sales and purchases data provided by third parties have facilitated the determination of discrepancies between actual sales and purchases vis-a-vis declared sales and purchases per tax returns filed. The discrepancies that have been noted so far were in general undisputed. How can one party to the transaction deny the information provided by the other party to the transaction?

Legal basis

The power of the BIR Commissioner to get information from third parties is supported by law. Under the National Internal Revenue Code (Tax Code), the Commissioner has the authority to obtain from any person or office any information for the following purposes: (1) ascertain the correctness of any return; (2) make a return when none has been made; (3) determine the tax liability of a person; (4) collect any tax liability and (5) evaluate tax compliance.

The Commissioner may summon any officer or employee of the taxpayer, or any person having custody of the books of accounts and other accounting records, or any other person to appear before him or his duly authorized representative to produce such books, records or any other data and to give testimony.

The BIR Commissioner may base his assessment on the "best evidence obtainable" when the reports submitted by the taxpayer are false, incomplete or erroneous or when the reports/records requested are not provided by the taxpayer.

To cite an example, when the taxpayer's records are lost, the Commissioner, may look at the sales, receipts, income or other taxable base of other persons engaged in similar businesses under similar situations or circumstances in order to prescribe a minimum amount of gross sales, receipts or taxable base of another taxpayer.

The Commissioner also has authority to inquire into bank deposit accounts in certain cases such as: (1) a decedent to determine his gross estate; (2) any taxpayer who has filed an application for compromise of his tax liability under the Tax Code by reason of financial incapacity or (3) any taxpayer who waives in writing his privilege under the law on secrecy of bank deposits.

There is a gold mine of information internally and externally that can be tapped by the BIR to increase tax collections.

However, this wealth of information was, in the past, not widely utilized by tax examiners except by those who are well-trained, experienced and/or highly motivated. In most cases, it is through hard work, creativity and initiative of the examiners that these information were obtained. These efforts are however not without their just rewards. Through the years, the BIR, with the use of computers, has been gradually building its data base and capability. Systems and procedures have been implemented and improved whereby these valuable information provided by buyers/customers, suppliers, withholding agents, government offices particularly regulatory bodies, informers and tax authorities of other countries are regularly gathered and processed. More importantly, these data have become increasingly accessible to the revenue enforcement officers.

Customers/buyers

Quarterly local purchases and importations by certain customers/buyers liable to value added tax (VAT) are now stored in the BIR's data bank. These are gathered from the detailed information prescribed in the Quarterly Summary List of Local Purchases and Input Tax and the Quarterly Summary List of Importations required to be submitted together with the Quarterly VAT Returns filed by all persons liable to VAT with quarterly total purchases (net of VAT) exceeding P1 million. The data on local purchases are matched by the BIR with the sales reported by the other party and any discrepancies noted are required to be explained otherwise, they will be assessed. In the case of importations, those reported by a taxpayer are compared with those provided by the Bureau of Customs.

Similarly, quarterly sales/receipts by certain suppliers liable to VAT are at present being loaded in the BIR's computer. These data are from the detailed information prescribed in the Quarterly Summary of Sales to Regular Buyers/Customers and Casual Buyers/Customers and Output Tax by all persons liable for VAT with quarterly total sales (net of VAT) exceeding P2.5 million. Again, the sales data are matched with the purchases reported by the other party and the discrepancy reported are checked.

From the detailed information in the Annual Information Return of Income Tax Withheld at Source may be gathered the income payments made to specific persons. A comparison is made between the income payment made and the income that has been reported by the recipient. Any unexplained discrepancy will result in a deficiency tax assessment.

Inside information particularly those coming from persons who have personal knowledge of under declarations of sales, income and other violations of the Tax Code are received by the BIR on a confidential basis.

The denunciation may be made by disgruntled officers, dismissed employees, business partners that have a falling out, dissatisfied customers, competitors, professional informers, civic minded citizens or just anybody who wants to get even with the taxpayer. Tax fraud investigations are usually based on this information.

The Tax Code grants reward to persons instrumental in the discovery of violations and in the discovery and seizure of smuggled goods. The reward in the case of Tax Code violations is 10 percent of the amount collected or P1 million per case whichever is lower. In the case of smuggled goods, the reward is 10 percent of the fair market value of confiscated goods or P1 million per case whichever is lower.

All government agencies concerned are directed under EO No. 53 to provide the BIR with the necessary information on a regular basis to help increase tax collections. The Department of Finance and the BIR have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with various agencies and instrumentalities of the National Government and local government units for the purpose of providing accurate and timely exchange of information and enhancing inter-agency cooperation toward a more efficient and effective tax collection. Some of these government agencies are the Bureau of Customs, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Land Registration Authority, the Land Transportation Office and the Department of Interior and Local Governments, among others.

To trace a person's taxable transactions under a computerized system EO No. 52 requires the indication of the Taxpayer's Identification Number (TIN) on certain documents submitted to government agencies and instrumentalities. These documents include registration certificates of owners of land, sea or air transportation, building construction permits, documents pertaining to real property transactions registered with the Register of Deeds, sugar quedans and domestic bills of lading.

The information in documents/records on file in other government regulatory agencies is compared with those declared with the BIR for tax purposes.

Other countries

The BIR has agreements with tax authorities of other countries for the exchange of information regarding their respective taxpayers and certain transactions particularly cross-border transactions entered into by said taxpayers. This information may be regularly provided and/or may be available upon request by the tax authority of the other country. Matching of the transaction reported in one jurisdiction and the other jurisdiction may be made for tax purposes.

Moving forward, reports have it that the BIR is establishing a state-of-the-art centralized Data Warehouse. Once established, the Data Warehouse will serve as a central repository of data gathered from internal and external sources such as from those discussed above.

Obtaining information

Information may be obtained by the BIR from third parties primarily through access to records of third parties and access to its very own databank.

The usual mode by which the BIR obtains information from third parties is to issue an access letter signed by the Commissioner or his representative. The revenue officers named in said access letter are authorized to secure the desired documents/data. Refusal by the third party to provide the requested information may be a ground for the BIR to investigate the third party for internal revenue tax liabilities.

The BIR is sitting on a mountain of third party information. There are the tax returns filed by taxpayers, reports submitted by government agencies, confidential information provided by informers and exchange of information with other tax authorities. All it has to do is gather and process the same and provide them to its enforcement units.

Through the computerized consolidation and cross referencing of these information, discrepancies can readily be noted as exhibited by the highly successful results of the Reconciliation of Listings for Enforcement (RELIEF) System. As taxpayers are gradually being required to electronically file their tax returns and to submit more detailed information about their transactions in electronic form, the computerized matching and reconciliation of data from internal and external sources by the BIR have become very effective in uncovering under-declarations.

Electronic linkages with other government agencies and taxpayers such as with excise tax establishments as well as those with electronic documentary stamp tax metering machines enable the BIR to effectively monitor taxable transactions of these entities.

The new BIR Commissioner has noted the availability of "extensive IT infrastructure" in the Bureau as well as the "wealth of technical expertise and practical experience in tax administration" of BIR personnel, which is "on its way to being at par with any foreign tax administration."

While it may have been long in coming, it is nevertheless noteworthy that the BIR is rediscovering the potent resource in its hands—third party information.

Firm shows (literally) where buyers are

By Davidson Torres
Contributor

POP or Point -of-Purchase Network TVs are located where the consumers are deciding on what to buy.

NOTICE the rows of television sets placed inside different Metro supermarkets these days?

Hanging from the ceiling above the different aisles, each screen continuously flashes product commercials, TV shows, music videos and even household tips.

Buyers can't help but gravitate their eyes towards these monitors, pausing for a moment to watch . . . and then consider buying a product they didn't think of before.

This selling strategy is known as the Supermarket POP Network, an the innovative concepts of Image One, the multimedia corporation of GMA Network.

"We're constantly creating new kinds of advertising media as people become more and more mobile," says Image One chair and CEO Joel Jimenez, "and the POP Network is one of them."

The 38-year-old media executive started Image One along with two other partners upon seeing the advantages of non-traditional advertising media in the country.

Apart from the POP Network, the company has two other advertising venues, namely, Channel Big, the 100-square-meter electronic billboard at the Edsa-Guadalupe area, and Mall TV in Glorietta's food court and movie areas. Both employ screen-type advertisements with graphics and intense audio feed.

"Unlike static ads," Jimenez adds, "your eyes are naturally drawn to the movement and that's already a big advantage."

The POP Network is actually the company's best-seller.

"We call it POP or Point-of-Purchase because they're located right at the spot where the consumers are deciding on what to buy, right at the decision point," explains Nicky Hidalgo, GMA's sales director in charge of Image One. "It's the final battleground," he adds.

Located at Robinson's Galleria, Robinson's Ermita, Makati Supermart Alabang, Sta. Lucia Mall and Cherry Foodarama, the POP Network consists of 50 television screens strategically located throughout the shopping and check-out areas. Advertisers usually average 24-36 spots a day, or 2-3 spots per hour.

Some advertisers also have what is called a directional aisle guide or DIG, a 15-second flash point which tells buyers on what aisle a particular product is found. "This eliminates buyers from asking, *'Miss, saan ba yung detergent?'*" Hidalgo also adds.

POP however isn't limited to indoor product merchandising. Virtually 50 percent of what is being shown are actually specific programming material covering topics such as tips on cooking, health and beauty, baby and toddler care, household upkeep as well as selected music videos and shows.

This "final battleground" technique has produced some interesting results. In a survey done by Philippine Survey Research Corp. (PSRC), 60 percent of shoppers in POP Network supermarkets say that next to posters, supermarket TV is their next source of information on products.

(Information is based on PSRC's Project: "WEEDLEPOP," A Study on Supermarket Point-of-Purchase Media final report.)

The survey also noted that four in 10 people already depend on supermarket TV as a source of information, while about three in ten claim to get information from sales people. "The beauty of it is that since companies are tightening their budgets," Hidalgo explains, "they're looking for a venue where they can place their ads right at the decision-making point."

"For instance," Hidalgo elaborates, 'while you have to shell out as much as a hundred thousand pesos or more for a traditional commercial, for a fraction of that amount you can advertise right inside the supermarket.' Another plus is that small and medium companies can get equal exposure along with the bigger companies.

One advantage advertisers have seen is that the network can be utilized to market certain products depending on the income-level group. A product ad at Robinsons Galleria can particularly target high-income consumers living at nearby Corinthian Gardens, while another product (such as sardines) that has mass appeal can be targeted to a wider variety of shoppers at Sta. Lucia East Mall.

As the company sees it, the concept of placing non-traditional, alternative forms of advertisement in strategic venues is basically going full circle.

"We're really bonding the whole thing," Hidalgo also points out, "*so meron na kami ngayong billboard, meron na kaming mall,* and finally the last stage of *bilihan* which is the supermarket network."

Ex-Energy sec's kids are sisters act in food and pastry business

IT IS not a bean; actually, it is a climbing orchid with podlike capsules. But it is more popularly known as a flavoring, especially for desserts. Without it, many of your favorite cakes, ice cream and pastry will not taste or even smell good.

Vanilla is the essence of most desserts. This was the reason sisters Trina Tiaoqui and Carissa Tiaoqui thought it would be a good name for a café, patisserie and catering service.

They came up with Vanilla Bean Café, now with a new outlet at the Ground Floor, Adamson Centre Bldg., L.P. Leviste St., Salcedo Village, Makati.

Food lover family

Born to a family who loves to eat— dining out is a Saturday tradition and scrimping in restaurants when traveling is a no-no— Trina and Carissa both took up business-oriented courses.

Trina, the eldest in a brood of three, finished Economics at the Ateneo while Carissa, the youngest, took up Marketing Management at De La Salle. (Between them is a brother, now based in Guam.)

It was Trina who always loved baking until she also took a liking for cooking which grew into a passion she eventually shared with Carissa.

They tried baking apple pies and brownies in the house. At first, their customers were mostly friends and relatives. But as the word spread around, their client list grew. Trina and Carissa realized it seemed to be a good business.

Studying food

With the blessings and financial support of a father, former Energy Secretary Mario Tiaoqui, they both hied off to San Francisco to enroll at the California Culinary Academy.

Trina took the two-year chef's course while Carissa studied intensive baking and pastry for eight months.

Coming back to the Philippines, they put up the Malate shop and started catering for small groups in the corporate and even diplomatic sector, particularly in Manila, while at the same time, getting orders for cakes and pastries.

Trina would, of course, do the cooking while Carissa, the baking. Outside of the kitchen, they also divided the work between themselves—Trina took care of purchasing and operations and Carissa supervised the personnel.

When they put up Vanilla Bean, they knew that, as entrepreneurs-cum-chef-and-baker, it would be hard work.

"But then we just love doing it—cooking and baking and, besides, we love eating so we knew we would enjoy running the business," Trina declares, adding they were the first entrepreneurs in the family.

As to how they went about recipes, it did not follow that they would just adopt recipes learned from culinary school. They started to come up with their own or improve existing recipes, suiting them to the Filipino palate. If there was a "taster," it would be their mother whose taste, they observed, is in tune with a lot of people.

Vanilla Bean Malate would become known not only for intimate catering but also its cakes and pastries. The latter would, in fact, be in great demand during Christmas as giveaways. Business at Malate would eventually prosper until, as Trina says it, they would become financially independent from their father who had provided them initial capital. The former energy secretary gave his daughter pointers on logistics.

Find the place

They thought they could already expand by putting up another outlet. For a time, while they already had the necessary capital—a healthy ROI from the Malate outlet, they could not, however, find "the right place with the right price." Until they found the ground floor of Adamson Centre. They saw it was a good place, strategically located in the commercial business district of Makati.

Barely three months since it opened in Makati, Vanilla Bean has been attracting a fairly large crowd who enjoy their baked goods.

Among the lunch entrees and salads, Seafood Au Gratin and Japanese crab salad are the favorites. They also serve breakfast until 10:30 a.m.

When asked how Vanilla Bean is different, Trina and Carissa answer: "Our cakes are not the usual. Also, we really use the best quality ingredients; we don't scrimp and we don't cut corners."

It's hard work for the two—juggling between the two outlets—but now their respective roles are clearly defined. Every now and then, their parents would come, usually in the afternoon, just to see how they are doing but not to "make *pakialam*," according to them.

Their respective significant others are also very supportive to them. Trina married only last January; her husband is with a foreign bank. Carissa's boyfriend is into the printing business.

While any business would aim for the bottom line, to Trina and Carissa, the focus, however, is not money.

"We just love to do what we are doing," they say.

Like seasoned entrepreneurs, Trina and Carissa have mastered how to cope with the large volume of orders.

They do not just love what they are doing; they also know what they are doing and they seem to excel in it.

GMA lists ways it will use to boot ABS-CBN out of the top spot

MARKETING STRATEGY

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FOR the first time in over a decade, the last jewel in the Lopez empire, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., is under serious threat from archrival GMA Broadcasting Corp.

GMA is on an all-out bid to grab the top spot in the prized ratings game over the next two years.

Orchestrating GMA's assault is lawyer Felipe L. Gozon who has declared that it is not the quality of the shows which are of prime importance but the bottom line.

In a previous interview he says he is not one to put too much emphasis on quality shows as most of these do not make money.

"Ever since I came on as President and CEO, I told everybody how I hated being number 2 and that all our next moves should be geared towards regaining our number one position," Gozon says.

In two years under Gozon, GMA claims it has narrowed the gap with ABS-CBN on overall ratings from a gaping 70 percent in the late 1980s and 1990s to single-digit levels at present.

"We're either closing in or getting even or slightly ahead of ABS-CBN in all major time slots except for prime time or the soap block (roughly between 6 to 9 in the evening)," Gozon states. "I think the telenovela is the final battlefront in the TV wars. If we beat them here, we will win the war."

GMA, which lorded it over the ratings game during the Marcos years, relinquished the throne to ABS-CBN in 1986 when the Lopez family got back the media unit and embarked on a shopping spree to snare popular talents and top-rating shows at that time.

After gaining the top spot, ABS-CBN spent heavily in building its own talent pool to ensure that it would remain number one on the boob tube and keep GMA and other networks eating its dust.

Gozon says GMA has refused to engage ABS-CBN in a bidding war to get the best talents in the business just to shore up their ratings not only because GMA does not have the war chest of ABS-CBN (which has been fattened by a very successful public offering in the 1990s), but because a resulting escalation of talents fees could ultimately destroy the business.

Tightwad

GMA executive vice president Gilberto R. Duavit Jr. says Gozon has been "very tight" with the deployment of GMA's resources and this has resulted into a cost-efficient operations.

"Before we can even get budget approval, we must convince him on the benefits of spending this much money," he explains.

For example, Duavit says GMA spends much less on its TV news programs than ABS-CBN.

Gozon says while money was important in television just like in any other business, there were other intangible factors that could lead to success in the field.

He says he took on his new post like a fresh law graduate reviewing for the bar exams. Since TV was basically a ratings game, he reasons that a program must rate before the station could sell to advertisers. In order to rate, GMA had to give the audience what they wanted.

Research

One of Gozon's first acts in office was to set up GMA's own research department that would get inside the viewers' heads to get a closer look on what makes a certain show or celebrity click.

"A TV show is no different from the food we eat that hire professional tasters in their research. We showed our subjects pilot episodes of our new shows and we went out of our way to viewers of ABS-CBN," he says.

He says the scientific approach was more cost efficient than relying on gut feel or guess work that result in big hits as well as costly misses.

"Developing a TV show is more expensive than making a film. But the returns are infinitely bigger because a film only lasts two hours while a soap opera could be aired 65 times in a single, 13-week season," Duavit says.

Gozon says GMA's research showed that people want to feel "light" after watching which was why it opted to focus more on situation comedies such as the wildly popular Bubble Gang and Kool Ka Lang. *"Ayaw nilang masikip ang dibdib pagkatapos manood."*

He says this was why GMA came up with "Wish Ko Lang"—where newscaster Bernadette Sembrano fulfills TV viewers' dreams.

Gozon also notes that TV viewers today were more discriminating in what TV shows they wanted to watch. "They know when they are being shortchanged by shows with hackneyed scripts and inferior sets. That is why it pays not only to know what they want to watch but to produce it well," he says.

All fronts

Gozon admits that GMA has been fortunate to have a lucky streak with the new shows that it has come out with in the past two years. But while there might be shows that unexpectedly attain phenomenal success such as RPN's Marimar telenovela a few years ago, Gozon stresses that one or two shows do not win the war; it has to be won on all fronts.

Since ABS-CBN got the best people by ratcheting up the salary scale, Gozon says GMA had to squeeze the best out of its creative pool that stayed loyal to the firm by managing the firm's finances well.

So far, GMA's gambit has been paying off. Talents that have stayed on or have migrated from the other side of the fence.

Another key maneuver employed by Gozon was to reduce GMA's ad rates for its prime time shows in order to lure in more advertisers.

Gozon says that sponsors found their proposition more cost-efficient because they spend less for advertising for practically the same number of viewers since the ratings gap between ABS-CBN and GMA shows has been slashed to single-digit levels from a peak of 40 to 50 percent a few years ago.

"We gave them more eyeballs for their advertising peso and the result has been an overload of ads," says Duavit who notes that GMA had to extend its 30-minute shows to 40 minutes to comply with the regulators strict limits.

With a tightly managed ship, inspired creative staff, and keen marketing strategy, GMA's bottom line has improved—revenues jumped 18 percent to P3.8 billion in the first 11 months year with net income 66 percent to P484 million in November.

Expansion plans

Aside from enhancing its programming, Duavit says GMA would also focus on improving further the station's reception in key city areas; restart its UHF channel; and trim further its outstanding debt (it has cut its outstanding obligations by P500 million to less than P1.5 billion this year using only operating cash).

Should the market improve within the next two years, Duavit says GMA will pursue an initial public offering to raise fresh money to bankroll its broader expansion targets.

"We want to create more studios, modernize existing equipment; start penetrating the international market."

Gozon declares that that the soap block was the biggest hurdle to GMA's ambition. "It's difficult to sway viewers once they get hooked on a telenovela because they invest their time to see how things unfold and their emotion with the characters. It takes time to wrench them away from their viewing habits."

He says ABS-CBN has a huge headstart in this category and it shows with the quality of their fare in the timeslot where it has allocated the bulk of its resources.

"We'll continuously improve our program content and back it up with heavy promotion," he says.

But based on current trends, Gozon said GMA should equal or surpass ABS-CBN in the overall ratings picture by next year or 2004 in time for the political ad bonanza. "The competition is not sitting down and they are making a lot of changes. But I believe that we will prevail."

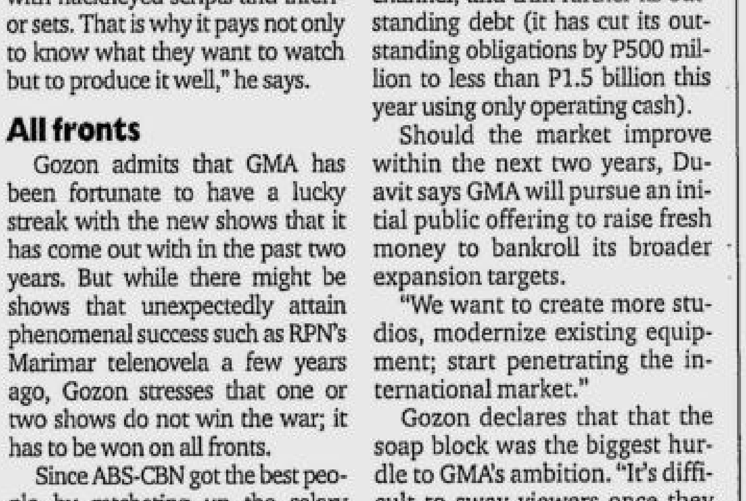
After 9 years, ladies clothes shop goes into franchising

AFTER nine years in the retail business Unica Hija, the fashion store that caters to ladies who go for basic apparel, goes into franchising. In the recently concluded 28th Philippine Business Conference sponsored by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry held at the Manila Hotel, Unica Hija had their first franchise exhibit that was well attended by business enthusiasts and entrepreneurs. Unica Hija opened its first provincial branch and biggest store at the ground floor of SM Pampanga.

From its first boutique in Greenhills, it has 10 more outlets located in major malls in Metro Manila.

Interested provincial franchise holders may get in touch with Michelle dela Cruz of RV Franchise Ventures, Inc. at (02)4101111, (02)3718373, telefax (02)4132464.

Unica Hija stores are located at Greenbelt Shopping Plaza, Festival Supermall, SM North Edsa, SM Sucat, SM Pampanga, SM City Manila, Robinsons Galleria, Robinsons Metro East Pasig, Robinsons Department Store in Galleria, and Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall.



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VIP F/M 09192714186 IVY

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Edward 7289285 09193365411

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L-BAHAY 712-16-92

L-BAHAY 781-2564

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Makati Off Res T-7285269 Owner in US (425)4230101

HOUSE & LOT

MANILA

SN ANDRES MLA
NR SSHIWAY Bnew
Twnhse/3stry/3br/3tb/grge/maid
P2.745M up 8903461 loc 34

QUEZON CITY

HL nr Ateneo 3M 6819868

RIZAL

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Overlooking w/view New 3BR MAIDS 2C'PORT 1½Storey Lot:150m² HS:131m² 9408240

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

CONDO/TWNHSE

MANILA

NR LA SALLE TAFT
Twnhse/3stry/3br/3tb/grge P3.230M 8903461 loc 34

MANDALUYONG

Twnhse 2br2tb 1 cg utly ar good loc. 5322536 09178963522

LOT

PARANAQUE

MULTINATL 600 6819868

OTHER PROVINCIAL

✤IBA, ZAMBALES 10has 45M nr hway titled 0919-2221766

✤IBA, ZAMBALES 10has 40M 500meters nr beach 09192221766

✤ZAMBALES 18has 10M 100 mango trees 0919-2221766

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Comml/Office Condo 170sqm + 1 Car Parking Level 4 #409 corner Suite • Call Bennette 0917-5235764

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00'Revo/DLX/450T neg4554873

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CARS FOR RENT

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Multi-Storey Bldg.
GFA 1,922 sqm.

QUEZON CITY
Fairview Commonwealth Ave.
Lot 1,279 sqm.

Bagbag Mindanao Ave.
Lot 4,345 sqm. Lease 10 Yrs.

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Two (2) Warehouses 967
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Secured Compound Floor Free

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rear Quirino Ave.
Lot 6,459 sqm. Long Term

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CAR LOAN

1.5% FAST CAR LOAN 3677523/24

1.5% FAST CAR LOAN 7252780

1.5% FAST CAR LOAN 6560140

2% W/ Out Taking Car 6567685

2% w/o Taking Car 7228942/43

2% w/o Taking Car 8966633

2% w/o Taking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

BILLIARDS

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT OF MANILA
BRANCH 37

PHILIPPINE BANK
OF COMMUNICATIONS,
Plaintiff,
-versus- CIVIL CASE NO. 00-99290
EDWARD E. LINDENBERG
and MAURICE LIM,
Defendants.
x- -x

NOTICE OF SALE ON EXECUTION OF REAL PROPERTY

WHEREAS, by virtue of Writ of Execution dated November 15, 2002 issued by HON. VICENTE A. HIDALGO, Presiding Judge of Regional Trial Court, Manila, Branch 37 in the above-entitled case for the recovery by way of distraint of the sum of P4,199,399.22, the sum of P41,903.00 as liquidated damages and the further sum of P50,000.00 as and for attorney's fees, plus costs of suit, LEVY was made by the undersigned on February 21, 2001 thru the Register of Deeds of Makati City, upon the rights, interest and participation which the defendant EDWARD E. LINDENBERG have or may have on the realty together with its improvements existing thereon, which particularly described as follows to wit:

CONDOMINIUM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE NO. 54601
Unit 3D located on the 3rd level with an area of 37.5 sq.m. proportionate ownership of common area – 3.42% of the COSEL CENTER CONDOMINIUM in the diagrammatic floor plan appended to the enabling or master deed of the condominium project annotated on Transfer Certificate of Title No. 168372/T845 which embraces and describes the land located at City of Makati with an area of TWO HUNDRED TWENTY TWO (222) sq.m.

registered in accordance with the provisions of R.A. 4726 in the name of EDWARD E. LINDENBERG, single, of legal age, an American citizen under Vol. No. CT-274, page 01.

CONDOMINIUM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE NO. 54602
Unit 5C located on the 5th level with an area of 37.5 sq.m. proportionate ownership of common area – 3.42% of the COSEL CENTER CONDOMINIUM in the diagrammatic floor plan appended to enabling or master deed of the condominium project annotated on Transfer Certificate of Title No. 168372/T-845 which embraces and describes the land located at City of Makati with an area of TWO HUNDRED TWENTY TWO (222) sq.m.

registered in accordance with the provisions of R.A. 4726 in the name of EDWARD E. LINDENBERG, single, of legal age, an American citizen under Vol. No. CT-274, page 02.

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of said Writ of Execution and in accordance with Rule 39, Section 15, of the Rules of Civil Procedure, the undersigned will SELL at public auction to the highest bidder for CASH and in Philippine Currency on January 20, 2003 at 10:30 o'clock in the morning or soon thereafter at the Office of the Clerk of Court of Manila, RTC, Manila the above-described property/ies/realty in order to satisfy the said Writ of Execution, plus Sheriff's fees and expenses of sale.

Prospective bidders or buyers are hereby enjoined to investigate and verify for themselves the title of said realty encumbrances thereon if any there be.

FOR THE CLERK OF COURT AND
EX-OFFICIO SHERIFF, MANILA

(Sgd.) CONRADO G. LAMANO
Deputy Sheriff IV

WARNING
IT IS ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED TO REMOVE, DEFACE OR DESTROY THIS NOTICE OF SALE ON OR BEFORE THE DATE OF SALE UNDER PENALTY OF LAW.

(PDI–Dec. 27, 2002 and Jan. 3, 2003)

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

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Wanted Ahente, Secretary Computer Literate 25yrs below Nr Malinta Valenzuela Call Lorie 9835991 to 94

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WANTED DENTIST T-8700378

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late **Emiliano Estacio** was extrajudicially settled with waiver of rights by his heirs consisting of "ME-SALA" Account - Capital Contribution & Savings Deposit in the total amount of P1,335,084.77 more or less per Doc. 02, Page 1, Book XVI, Series of 2002 before Notary Public Alex M. Alvarez of Makati City.
(PDI-Dec. 20, 27, 2002 & Jan. 3, 2003)

NOTICE OF LOSS

NOTICE is given that Passport# DD535067 owned by **REYNALDO L. SILVESTRE** was lost. In case found, pls. call the owner@0917-4876865 or 1261 Sisa St., Sampaloc, Manila.
(PDI-January 3, 2003)

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NOTICE OF LOSS

I, Wang Shao Hua, citizen of the People's Republic of China & holder of PROC Passport No. CHN-14-6003828 hereby report its loss and declared its INVALIDITY.

- WANG SHAO HUA

(PDI - Jan. 3, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
City of Parañaque
Metro Manila

Office of the Treasurer

NOTICE OF AUCTION SALE

To satisfy the real estate tax delinquency of the following taxpayers, computation of which includes interest, surcharges and penalties thereon as of December 2002 and after substantially complying with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act 7160, the City Mayor through the undersigned City Treasurer, hereby gives notice to all interested parties and to the public in general that on **February 7, 2003 at 10:00 o'clock in the morning at the Legislative Session Hall Bldg., Parañaque City**, the City Treasurer or his authorized representatives will sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash and in Philippines Currency, the real estate properties described below:

Declared Owner	Area (Sqm.)	Classification	Tax Dec. #	Location/ Year	Amount of Delinquency	Interest Due
1.) Manila Int'l. Airport Authority						
	71,609	Com. Lot	E016-01385	Bgy. Vitalez-1998-2002	8,056,012.50	4,640,263.20
TCT No.: 98827, 98828, 98829, 98830, 98831, 98832, 98833, 98834, 98835, 98836, 98837, 98838, 98839, 98840, 98841, 98842, 98867, 98869, 98870, 98871, 98872, 98873, 98874, 98843, 98844, 98845, 98846, 98847, 98848, 98849, 98850, 98876, 98851, 99478, 98858, 98868, 98859, 98860, 99475, 98861, 98862, 98863, 98864, 98865, 98866, 98877, 98852, 98853, 98854, 98855, 98856, 98857, 113460, 111362, 106124, 106125, 106127, 77873						
	193,760	Com. Lot	E016-01387	Bgy. Vitalez-1998-2002	43,596,000.00	25,111,296.00
TCT No.: S-73727, S-73728, S-73729, S-73730, S-73731, S-73732, S-73733, S-73734, S-73735, S-73736, S-73737, S-73743, S-74344 S-74345, S-74346, S-74347, S-74348, S-74349, S-74350, S-73738, S-73739, S-73740, S-73741, S-73701, S-73702, S-73703, S-73704 S-73705, S-73706, S-73707, S-73708, S-73709, S-73710, S-73711, S-73712, S-73713, S-73714, S-73715, S-73716, S-73717, S-73718 S-73719, S-73720, S-73721, S-73722, S-73723, S-73724, S-73725, S-73726, S-78324, S-78325, S-78326, S-78327, S-73742, S-73290 S-73291, S-73292, S-73293, S-73294, S-73295, S-73296, S-73297, S-73298, S-73299, S-73300, S-73301, S-73302, S-73303, S-73304 S-73305, S-73306, S-73307, S-73308, S-73309, S-73310, S-73311, S-73312, S-73313, S-73314, S-73315, S-73316, S-73317, S-73318 S-73319, S-73320, S-73321, S-73322, S-73323, S-73324, S-73325, S-73326, S-73327, S-73328, S-73270, S-73271, S-73272, S-73287 S-73274, S-73275, S-73276, S-73277, S-73278, S-73279, S-73280, S-73281, S-73282, S-73283, S-73284, S-73285, S-73286, S-73287 S-73288, S-73289, S-73250, S-73251, S-73252, S-73253, S-73254, S-73255, S-73256, S-73257, S-73258, S-73259, S-73260, S-73261 S-73262, S-73263, S-73264, S-73265, S-73266, S-73267, S-73268, S-73269, S-73229, S-73230, S-73231, S-73232, S-73233, S-73234 S-73235, S-73236, S-73237, S-73238, S-73239, S-73240, S-73241, S-73242, S-73243, S-73244, S-73245, S-73246, S-73247, S-73248 S-73249, S-78318, S-78319, S-78320, S-78321, S-78322, S-78323, S-35428, S-40935, S-36357, S-39753, S-42726, S-36228, S-43655 S-43656, S-36964, S-36227, S-38750, S-39635, S-36755, S-36763, S-42730, S-42728, S-42999, S-43000, S-34034, S-37514, S-33512 S-42748, S-42747, S-38253, S-42731, S-36512, S-42859, S-45990, S-43169, S-36561, S-36562, S-43234, S-36563, S-36230, S-43657 S-43658, S-43659, S-36753, S-35403, S-36516, S-41801, S-35399, S-38751, S-36371, S-36362, S-36372, S-36363, S-36351, S-36364 S-36370, S-36369, S-34033, S-36127, S-39637, S-39636, S-36358, S-34732, S-34075, S-34076, S-34035, S-35728, S-36224, S-35729 S-44912, S-38192, S-35371, S-40933, S-36405, S-49202, S-44903, S-39638, S-35376, S-36354, S-35397, S-36394, S-43047, S-36711 S-43048, S-36710, S-44915, S-36226, S-42727, S-40983, S-36099, S-35372, S-39639, S-36360, S-40940, S-35406, S-41656, S-36361 S-40934, S-38191, S-38190, S-39944, S-39943, S-35783, S-35805, S-36220, S-36223, S-38162, S-38256, S-38255, S-49203, S-38189 S-38188, S-38187, S-38186, S-38185, S-42733, S-36356, S-44910, S-38184, S-44914, S-38183, S-44907, S-38182, S-35373, S-38181 S-35398, S-38180, S-44913, S-38179, S-38178, S-38177, S-44906, S-38176, S-43386, S-43385, S-43389, S-43388, S-43387, S-36513 S-36514, S-38174, S-38175, S-34631, S-34632, S-34633, S-38173, S-35401, S-44911, S-40937, S-44909, S-38172, S-35776, S-35775 S-35777, S-35778, S-35730, S-35731, S-38171, S-38170, S-38169, S-44908, S-38168, S-42729, S-38167, S-38166, S-44904, S-44905 S-38165, S-38164, S-38163, S-35402, S-44185, S-44875, S-34820, S-34821, S-34822, S-37389, S-36225, S-38193, S-39965, S-36637 S-35378, S-41913, S-39966, S-39967, S-36352, S-35400, S-40826, S-36714, S-45989, S-36703, S-34733, S-40827, S-38161, S-36393 S-36353, S-34734, S-36638, S-39968, S-36368, S-36459, S-40828, S-36254, S-40829, S-39969, S-42736, S-39970, S-36706, S-40939 S-36864, S-39971, S-36565, S-37706, S-39972, S-36367, S-36223, S-40830, S-36707, S-41914, S-40831, S-35427, S-44184, S-44183 S-36366, S-42739, S-39973, S-39974, S-39975, S-38194, S-34735, S-38195, S-39976, S-38196, S-40832, S-38197, S-40938, S-39977 S-36404, S-39978, S-40936, S-38198, S-38199, S-38200, S-38201, S-38202, S-38203, S-38160, S-38204, S-38205, S-38207, S-38208 S-38209, S-36365, S-34819, S-34818, S-33968, S-33969, S-34792, S-34791, S-35374, S-33511, S-33510, S-35375, S-35379, S-36712 S-36713, S-43082, S-36188, S-36187, S-35396, S-36754, S-36708, S-36709, S-42734, S-42735, S-36355, S-42737, S-36458,S-34338 S-34339, S-58655, S-38210, S-42732, S-33880, S-35377, S-43067, S-36542, S-34741, S-36157, S-33507, S-34160, S-36752, S-45702 S-42738, S-42725, S-42193, S-44886, S-36222, S-36200, S-78154, S-69213, S-53366						
TCT No.: 90330	838	Com. Lot	E016-01396	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	94,050.00	54,172.80
	25,665.6	Com. Improvement	E016-01374	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	123,047,671.50	80,416,385.92
	12,508	Com. Improvement	E016-01375	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	22,338,030.00	14,598,761.76
	30,000	Com. Improvement	E016-01376	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	64,056,980.00	41,863,700.16
	-	Com. Machineries	E016-01377	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	19,978,812.75	13,056,921.90
	-	Com. Machineries	E016-01378	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	122,407,064.00	79,997,724.26
	-	Com. Machineries	E016-01379	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	4,761,900.00	3,112,084.80
	-	Com. Machineries	E016-01380	Bgy. Vitalez-1992-2002	8,567,260.00	5,599,033.92
				Sub-Total	416,903,780.75	238,698,785.52
2.) D.M. Wenceslao & Associates Inc.						
TCT-100315	10,000	Commercial	E015-06716	Tambo-1998-2002	3,825,000.00	1,957,500.00
TCT-100316	10,000	Commercial	E015-06717	Tambo-1998-2002	3,825,000.00	1,957,500.00
TCT-100817	10,000	Commercial	E015-06718	Tambo-1998-2002	3,825,000.00	1,957,500.00
TCT-100818	7,720	Commercial	E015-06719	Tambo-1998-2002	2,952,900.00	1,511,190.00
TCT-104641	13,619	Commercial	E015-06720	Tambo-1998-2002	5,209,267.50	2,665,919.25
TCT-104639	10,531	Commercial	E015-06731	Tambo-1998-2002	4,028,107.50	2,061,443.25
TCT-104640	10,558	Commercial	E015-06732	Tambo-1998-2002	4,038,435.00	2,066,728.50
TCT-104643	10,573	Commercial	E015-06734	Tambo-1998-2002	4,044,172.50	2,069,664.75
TCT-101006	34,540	Commercial	E015-06735	Tambo-1998-2002	9,325,800.00	4,103,352.00
TCT-134310	39,391	Commercial	E015-06738	Tambo-1998-2002	15,067,057.50	7,710,788.25
TCT-134311	25,671	Commercial	E015-06739	Tambo-1998-2002	9,819,157.50	5,025,098.25
TCT-136258	10,000	Commercial	E015-06771	Tambo-1998-2002	1,800,000.00	576,000.00
				Sub-Total	67,759,897.50	33,662,684.25
3.) Wendel Holding Co. Inc.						
TCT-106043	53,620	Commercial	E015-06726	Tambo-1998-2002	20,513,475.00	10,498,072.50
TCT-107468	10,000	Commercial	E015-06728	Tambo-1998-2002	3,825,000.00	1,957,500.00
TCT-134308	79,384	Commercial	E015-06736	Tambo-1998-2002	30,364,380.00	15,539,418.00
				Sub-Total	28,437,030.00	13,883,805.00
4.) Manila Bay Land Holding Inc.						
TCT-95324	70,000	Commercial	E015-06715	Tambo-1999-2002	25,200,000.00	12,852,000.00
5.) Manila Bay Park Dev. Inc.						
TCT-135240	13,699	Commercial	E015-05803	Tambo-1999-2002	410,970.00	209,594.74
TCT-136449	7,154	Commercial	E015-06704	Tambo-1999-2002	214,620.00	109,456.20
TCT-136452	5,621	Commercial	E015-06707	Tambo-1999-2002	1,770,615.00	819,541.80
TCT-136454	6,868	Commercial	E015-06709	Tambo-1999-2002	2,163,420.00	1,001,354.40
TCT-136455	5,857	Commercial	E015-06710	Tambo-1999-2002	1,844,955.00	853,950.60
TCT-135242	21,567	Commercial	E015-06712	Tambo-1999-2002	7,764,120.00	3,959,701.25
TCT-135243	1,250	Commercial	E015-06713	Tambo-1999-2002	37,500.00	19,125.00
TCT-135244	1,250	Commercial	E015-06714	Tambo-1999-2002	37,500.00	19,125.00
				Sub-Total	14,243,700.00	6,991,848.99

(Sgd.) LIBERATO M. CARABEO
City Treasurer

(PDI--Jan. 3 & 10, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
LOCAL CIVIL REGISTRY OFFICE
Province of Pangasinan
City of Urdaneta

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. No. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that **NESTOR ABADICIO** has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from **ERNESTO** to **NESTOR** in the birth certificate of **ERNESTO BADICIO** who was born on **April 25, 1953** at **Sta. Ana, Cagayan** and whose parents are **DIONISIO ABADICIO** and **PETRA CARDENAS**.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office not later than **December 29, 2002.**

(Sgd.) **JUVY R. ORDOÑEZ**
OIC-City Civil Registrar

(PDI - Jan. 3, 2003)

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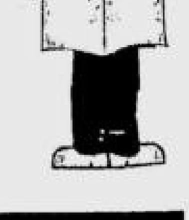

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Make our Love so like to Thine......

FAUSTA "ISING" UY LINGAN

Of Solana, Cagayan and Tuguegarao City

Peacefully joined her Creator on December 31, 2002 at the age of 82.

Her loving husband **Isidro** (†); children **Maride** and **Renato Limlengco** and **Ray** and **Ellen Tan**; foster son **Eddie** and wife **Tess De Guzman**; grandchildren **Joyce**, **Gayle**, **Grace** and **Kate**, **Raybee** and **Stephanie**; brothers and sisters **Vicente** (†), **Puring** (†), **Genio** and **Lita Palomo**, **Anday** (†), **Paclo** and **Oncing Tabbu** (†), **Gorio** (†) and **Besting Punzalan**, **Berto** and **Beechu Pun**, **Felipe** and **Pacing Pun**, **Saking** and **Charlie Chua**, **Noning** and **Nena Lim**; caregivers **Adang** and **Ingga Balmitan** and **Reggie Tolosa**, nephews, nieces and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Narra Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat, Parañaque.

She will be laid to rest at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque on Sunday, January 5, 2003.

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Our Dearly Beloved Papa

ATTY. TEODORO GONZALEZ LOPEZ

(Husband of the late **Rosario Borja Lopez**)

Peacefully joined his Creator on January 1, 2003 at the age of 81.

His loving children **CYNTHIA** and **FRANCIS DECANGCHON**, **DANILO**, **DODY** and **MARLYN FELICIANO** and **MA. REGINA**.

Grandchildren **Jan Paolo**, **Jean Marie**, **Francis Ted**, **Ma. Catalina**, **Josemaria**, **Ma. Stella**, **Ma. Rosario Jacinta**;

Brother and sisters **Vicente G. Lopez** (†), **Carmen G. Lopez**, **Leticia L. Medina** and **Lilia L. Borja** (†)

In-laws, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Faith, Arlington Memorial Chapels, Inc., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 5, 2003 at the La Loma Cemetery after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

Teresa Tuason Perez

of Pateros, Metro Manila and San Juan, Batangas

Peacefully joined our Lord on January 1, 2003 at the age of 74.

Her late husband **Jesus** (†); loving children **Cesar** & **Redem**, **Oscar** & **Divinia**, **Cora** & **Oscar**, **Elizabeth**, **Leopoldo**; together with brother **Demetrio** & sister-in-law **Angelita**; grandchildren, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Bahay Ugnayan - Samson Vigil Spaces at 145 Bayan Luma, Imus, Cavite.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 4, 2003 at the Gethsemane Memorial Garden Balayan, Batangas after 1:00 p.m. Mass.

LEWINO "LEWIE" ROJALES DIMAPILIS

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 30, 2002 at the age of 54.

His wife **Divine**; children **Lewie**, **Jenny**, **Garry**, **Joanna**; mother **Inay Peng**; brothers **Alvin**, **Jun**, and **Ruel**; sisters **Olive** and **Dora**; his relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in Buho, Silang, Cavite.

He will be laid to rest at Tagaytay City Cemetery on January 4, 2003, 1:00 p.m.

Dolores Imperial Lapak

of Talisay and Daet, Camarines Norte

Peacefully joined her Creator and her late husband ***ATTY. JOSE LAPAK*** *on December 29, 2002 after a lingering illness at the age of 79.*

Her loving

CHILDREN	IN-LAWS	GRANDCHILDREN
JOSE JR.	ELEANOR LIBO-ON	Maria Consuelo Dolores
EMMANUEL	NIEVES ORDAS	Maria Cecilia, John, Cristina, Lorenzo, Ma. Luisa
ANGELES	EVELYN LABARO	Raymund, Angelica, Angeles Jr., Ronald, Angelyne, Angela, Angelica
ISABELITA	JACINTO CHONG	Leslie
RAMON	MILLETTE FLORES	Carlo, Marionne, Charlyn Ann
REGENTE	SALLY OLAIRA	Ephraim Job
MA. FRANCIS	JESUS CRISOSTOMO	Iris
JULIA SOCORRO	ANTONIO, JR.	Maria Paula, Giolo

great grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Remedios St., Pasig, Daet, Camarines Norte.

Interment will be at Daet Catholic Cemetery on Saturday, January 4, 2003 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

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"One Thing I ask of the Lord; this I seek; to dwell in the Lord's house all the days of my life..."

AURELIO B. DE JESUS

of Plaridel, Bulacan

Peacefully joined his Creator on January 01, 2003 at the age of 82.

His wife **Natividad**; children **Gene**, **Joe** & **Alison**; brothers, sister and in-laws, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the St. Joseph Community Center, Sambag, Jaro, Iloilo City.

Interment will be at the Christ the King Memorial Park, Iloilo City on January 04, 2003 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:39

E-mail: pr_business@inquirer.com.ph

BUSINESS

Gov't starts enforcing new Clean Air rules

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy has begun testing gasoline products sold here to check whether the country's oil firms and their retailers are complying with the new provisions of the Clean Air Act of 1999.

Test results, however, will take a few days to confirm.

In an interview, Energy Undersecretary JV Emmanuel de Dios said the energy department would not be able to cover all gasoline stations, as it lacked enough personnel for the job.

There are about 3,767 gasoline stations spread across the country.

Most of these belong to the "Big Three" oil refiners—Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex (Philippines) Inc.—which collectively hold about 90 percent of the market.

The Clean Air Act provides that gasoline products sold and used locally should contain no more than 35 percent aromatics, a harmful additive, starting Jan. 1.

Violators of the law are faced with fines of not less than P10,000 and no more than P100,000 or six years in jail.

De Dios said the energy department's approach in this matter was similar to what it did when leaded gasoline was phased out on Jan. 1, 2000.

"We are requiring (the dealers) to submit bottled samples of their products, which we are going to test," he said.

He added that energy officials were taking measures to ensure that the samples were the same as the products that the oil firms were actually selling.

"We are also readying a portable testing device for the products that we would deploy in the Visayas and in Mindanao," De Dios said.

He said test results would have a lag time of "a few days."

Local oil firms have said the implementation of the new fuel specifications will jack up pump prices by 20 centavos to P1.50 a liter.

Late last month, oil executives said prices were expected to go up by at least P1 a liter this month.

Caltex raised by 49 centavos a liter over the weekend the prices of its gasoline, diesel and kerosene.

Roberto Kanapi, Pilipinas Shell general manager for external affairs, said in an interview that his firm had deferred a pricing decision to this day.

In a radio interview yesterday morning, Kanapi said price increases for this month would include costs for complying with the new specifications and of rising crude costs in the world market.

Gold
Silver
Diesel
Kerosene
6.40
15.91
12.08
11.62

A GAS station in Kamuning, Quezon City. Energy officials have begun testing gasoline products sold by retailers like this one to check for compliance with the provisions of the Clean Air Act. JOAN BONDOC

PPA recovery offers small relief, Meralco says

THE MANILA Electric Co. said yesterday that a decision by the Energy Regulatory Commission allowing it to recoup "under-recovered" purchased power adjustment fees worth P5.76 billion offered little relief.

The ERC last month allowed Meralco to recover PPA charges that it stopped collecting from January 2000 to September 2002.

Meralco is also faced with a Supreme Court-ordered refund to customers estimated at between P8 billion and P28 billion.

In an interview, Meralco chief of utility economics Ivanna de la Peña said the ERC's Dec. 19 decision pertained to purchased power, while the Supreme Court's Nov. 15 order was about distribution charges.

The PPA refers to adjustments in a distributor's charges owing to costs of electricity bought from suppliers like the National Power Corp. and independent power producers.

Meralco president Jesus Francisco said the decision was a welcome development, but he said the company was "slightly disappointed because of the small amount."

In a five-page decision, the ERC said while the utility claimed it still had under-recovered PPA amounting to P9.2 billion, the commission computed only P7.3 billion.

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₱500M seen from new VAT rule on refined sugar

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE GOVERNMENT will generate some P500 million in additional revenue from a new regulation enhancing rules on advanced value-added tax payments on refined sugar, Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said yesterday.

Last month, the Bureau of Internal Revenue issued Revenue Regulation No. 27-2002, which made it more difficult for owners or sellers of refined sugar to skip on advanced VAT payments.

The new rule bars proprietors and operators of sugar mills and refineries from withdrawing refined sugar from their premises without advanced VAT payments made by the owners or sellers and a proof of payment.

An internal revenue officer will be present at all times during the withdrawal of refined sugar to ensure compliance with the new rule.

Only agricultural cooperatives are exempt from advanced VAT payments pursuant to the Cooperative Code of the Philippines.

The revenue district office concerned or regional task force on sugar should issue a certificate of advanced VAT payments, which will serve as the authority of a sugar mill or refinery to release the refined sugar.

If a duly registered agricultural cooperative claims ownership, the sugar should still not be released unless an authorization allowing the release of refined sugar is secured.

In securing such authorization, the agricultural cooperative must also submit a sworn statement that the sugar has not been auctioned off, sold or transferred at any time prior to the products' removal from the refinery to a trader or another entity. The cooperative must also certify that the refined sugar is its property at the time of removal, and it will not charge advanced VAT payments or any other tax to the future buyer.

The amount of advance payments shall be determined by applying the VAT rate of 10 percent on the applicable base price per 50-kilogram bag of refined sugar.

If owned by the sugar refinery, the base price for the different types of refined sugar shall be: refined sugar/standard sugar/premium sugar, P850; plantation white, P800; blanco directo, P800; washed sugar, P780. If owned by others, the base price of the sugar shall be: P760, P740, P740 and P730.

Shortfall in microfinance loans seen rising to ₱102B

THE ESTIMATED shortfall in microfinance loans to help the poor will widen from nearly P60 billion last year to P102 billion in the next five years unless the government improves its policies on the issue, the Asian Development Bank said.

In an interim report reviewing microfinance for rural development, the ADB said "an appropriate policy environment" was required to induce rural banks and financial cooperatives to engage in microfinance.

"There is a need to raise the absorptive capacity of rural banks and cooperatives so that they can go into micofinance in a bigger way without putting their resources at greater risk," the ADB said.

Microfinance refers to the lending of small, unsecured loans to the poor for business.

The multilateral agency estimated that the potential demand for loans by the country's 3.72 million entrepreneurial poor families is P62 billion in 2002, increasing to P110 billion in 2007.

However, financial institutions could only supply an estimated P2.66 billion in loans last year and would only be able to provide P8.25 billion by 2007.

The magnitude of the supply gap in microfinance loans varies by region with Regions 4 to 9 projected to have a supply gap of more than P4 billion each.

The ADB said that rural banks could raise capital to overcome the constraint in mobilizing more deposits while meeting prudential standards.

World Bank clears $100-M textbook, healthcare loan

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE WORLD Bank has approved a $100-million loan to help the Philippine government provide more textbooks, classrooms, medicines and health centers for the poor.

The loan is part of the second phase of the World Bank's "Social Expenditure Management Project."

"With the government's tight fiscal condition, the loan is timely, as it seeks to support the needed social services," World Bank country director Robert Vance Pulley said.

The project will particularly help the Philippines increase the availability of textbooks, build new classrooms and provide medicines for public health programs.

It also seeks to support barangay-led activities for social services in poor municipalities.

The project will also have facilities for training programs that will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector agencies in the areas of procurement and financial management, improved allocation and use of resources, an increase in transparency and accountability.

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Live in the moment

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

Here's an anti-prediction advice to control freaks

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

I FELT fortunate to spend time again, after all these years, with an old mentor and friend from school, Sr. **Emma Vijandre.** Held in this special season, call it lunch to mark the in-between space of '02 and '03, if not in-between lives.

It wasn't really a blast from the past because Sister Emma is a nun not in the traditional mindset. Our nuns from St. Theresa's were hardly traditional, at least when we were growing up in that school; they not only went with the times, they could also be ahead of it. In my case, they helped build both mind and character, and through the eras, sometimes, a few of them like Sister Emma, were also around to see us change both mind and character, though not always in equal proportion.

She's just spent her sabbatical last year on a farm in Australia devoted to sessions meant to rediscover the universe, a "new consciousness." I won't even attempt to describe her stint for I don't understand it sufficiently. I only know that she emerged from it with a trove of poems and writings, and of course, experiences which again proved to me how people like her never ever tire of learning. A psychologist, she's one whose energy and pursuit of beliefs brought her through phases of commitments, from the academic and the scholarly to the political. When in one reminiscing last year, I wondered if all our rallies and teach-ins in the '70s and '80s had been all for naught, given how society seems to have changed for the worse, she told me, didn't they at least add "flavor" to my life? Flavor—that's a heartwarming term to describe one's march with life.

Now, at that lunch, in the rush of stories and updates on each other's life, I caught something she said which should help us greet the new year and leave behind the old one. This is the time of year for predictions and forecasts, many of them really guessing and wishing on a star.

Having known me since late grade school, she's used to my overwhining and overwishing, my overload of regrets and resolutions. Halfway into my why-this-and-why-not-that, she cut in: "Why do you keep asking questions which will never be answered now, whose answers might come only in time?"

Then she said, "Live in the moment."

"Yeah, I should live for the moment," I said.

"No, in the moment," she repeated, meaning, neither for the moment nor just living the moment.

"You're missing out on it, not enjoying it for what it plainly is," she said. No more, no less.

She said something like this: The future isn't even here, and who knows exactly what it is, so why dwell on it? The past is a baggage of memory and fears, so why get stuck in it?

I can't put it as well as she did, but it's something to that effect. She was trying to make me understand how and why one can control things only so much. For the new year, this is for you, all control freaks out there. It's not being philosophical, but just being basic, come to think of it.

You can't be in control every time, she said. Can't manage things/people all the time. There comes a point when one simply has to go with the flow, either seizing it or letting go.

If you think of it, there is really only the present, and if you make the most of it—give it what you've got, be it for work, family and country—then the future takes care of itself; the future is the best reward from the present. That's not being fatalistic, that's being efficient, pragmatic—and sensitive. It's being sensitive to the pulse of the moment (in our magazine publishing world, we might call it marketing savvy). It's giving today your best shot. Integrity of mind, labor and character.

To apply this living-in-the-moment elsewhere: if, for instance, **GMA** weren't, as they say, too hung up on 2004, she wouldn't have been getting so much flak.

Live in the moment so we can move on, not based on predictions or solely on empirical projections or wishful thinking, but on honest and informed confrontation of the golden opportunities of the present. For the present is all we've got.

If we're able to do as Sister Emma suggests, perhaps we'll be ready for all the goats that will come into our lives or into our texts, in the Year of the Goat. Happy New Year!

Home store

Speaking of people who know how to seize the moment, no matter the odds, I can mention a few I ran into over the holidays.

At Citem cocktails/fashion show held at **Budji Layug's** B at Home for visiting Shanghai journalists, we learned that **Budji** is opening a home store in Bangkok featuring Philippine high-end furniture, including his, and also in Sydney, Australia, where top photographer **Neal Oshima** will be based from here on to help Budji. Budji, with **Bea Roxas**, already has a store in Madrid, which is doing well. This is certainly good news for Filipino design, a result of years of dogged promotion and hard work initiated by Citem, then headed by **Eli Pinto**, for the home-design group Movement 8... Citem's new head **Fely Tan Co**, on the other hand, has her own firm vision. She's diversifying the products being promoted by Citem to include the renowned Philippine food products. She believes our products such as mangoes and *bagoong* have a huge captive market abroad, led by our overseas workers and the Filipino communities. What's ambitious and bold is her plan to penetrate China and sell our specialized food products to that huge market.

The Fashion Design Council of the Philippines, this year led by **Randy Ortiz** and **Tonichi Nocum**, is mobilizing its 30 members for a fashion show to be held in Shanghai showcasing high-end Philippine design. In March, Philippine products, including fashion designs, will be showcased in "Ties that Bind," a festival and fair in Shanghai. These young designers are determined to pitch their talents to the Chinese market. That should be good news unfolding.

E-mail the author at tsanjuan@skyinet.net

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Cebu Ayala, Tel. No. 231 5641

Beauty bar
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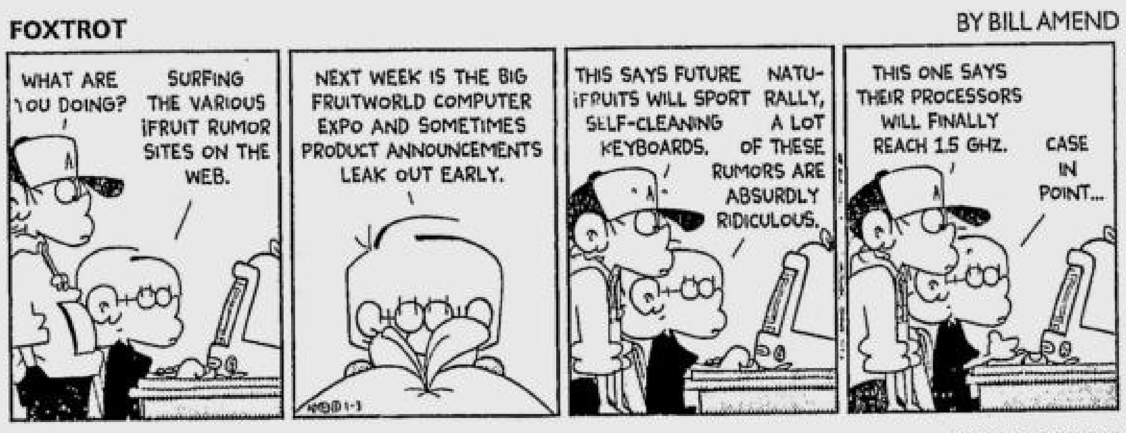
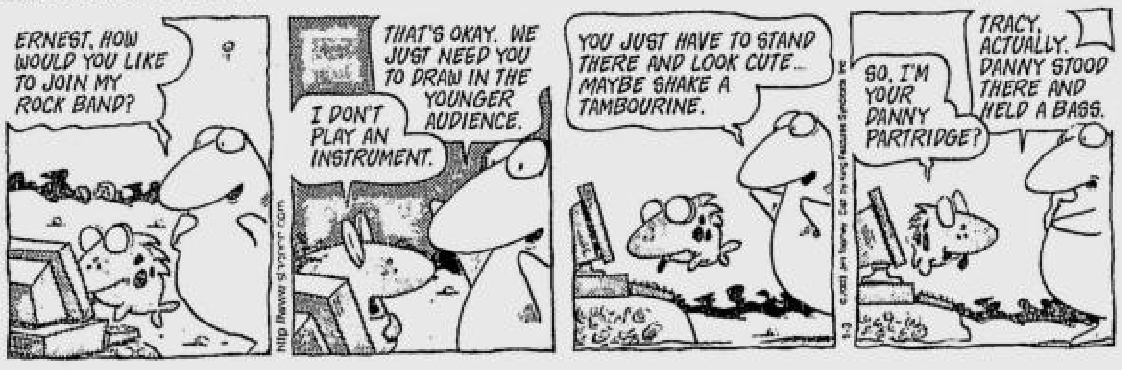
Per DTI-NCR Permit #5046 Series of 2002

• PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER •
ComicRelief
e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph
FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 2003

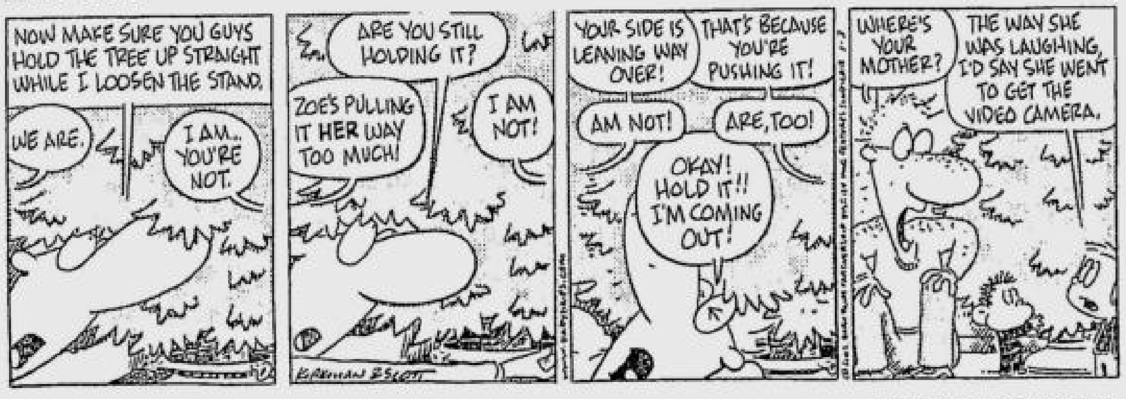
FOXTROT
BY BILL AMEND


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SURFING THE VARIOUS iFRUIT RUMOR SITES ON THE WEB.
NEXT WEEK IS THE BIG FRUITWORLD COMPUTER EXPO AND SOMETIMES PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENTS LEAK OUT EARLY.
THIS SAYS FUTURE iFRUITS WILL SPORT SELF-CLEANING KEYBOARDS.
NATURALLY, A LOT OF THESE RUMORS ARE ABSURDLY RIDICULOUS.
THIS ONE SAYS THEIR PROCESSORS WILL FINALLY REACH 1.5 GHZ.
CASE IN POINT...

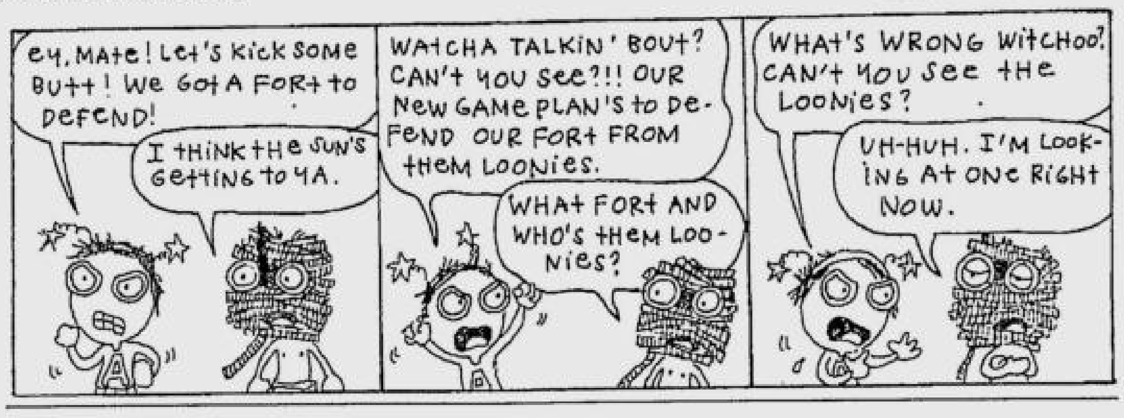
SHERMAN'S LAGOON
BY JIM TOOMEY


ERNEST, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN MY ROCK BAND?
I DON'T PLAY AN INSTRUMENT.
THAT'S OKAY. WE JUST NEED YOU TO DRAW IN THE YOUNGER AUDIENCE.
YOU JUST HAVE TO STAND THERE AND LOOK CUTE... MAYBE SHAKE A TAMBOURINE.
SO, I'M YOUR DANNY PARTRIDGE?
TRACY, ACTUALLY. DANNY STOOD THERE AND HELD A BASS.
http://www.slagoon.com

BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT


NOW MAKE SURE YOU GUYS HOLD THE TREE UP STRAIGHT WHILE I LOOSEN THE STAND.
WE ARE.
I AM... YOU'RE NOT.
ARE YOU STILL HOLDING IT?
ZOE'S PULLING IT HER WAY TOO MUCH!
I AM NOT!
YOUR SIDE IS LEANING WAY OVER!
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE PUSHING IT!
AM NOT!
ARE, TOO!
OKAY! HOLD IT!! I'M COMING OUT!
WHERE'S YOUR MOTHER?
THE WAY SHE WAS LAUGHING, I'D SAY SHE WENT TO GET THE VIDEO CAMERA.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO


ey, Mate! Let's kick some butt! We got a fort to defend!
I think the sun's getting to ya.
Watcha talkin' bout? Can't you see?!! Our new game plan's to defend our fort from them loonies.
What fort and who's them loonies?
What's wrong witchoo? Can't you see the loonies?
Uh-huh. I'm looking at one right now.

HOROSCOPE
BY EUGENIA LAST

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 2003

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Victoria Principal, Mel Gibson, Stephen Stills, Dabney Coleman, Danica McKellar

Happy Birthday: Take this year to put all your efforts into your own game plan. Stay focused and intent on reaching your goals. Your relentless courage will be admired, so don't bend to the demands that others try to put on you. Your numbers are 2, 5, 16, 28, 39, 41

ARIES (March 21-April 19): You have enough to accomplish without worrying about people who have no direction. Do what's best for you and move into a circle of friends who will contribute to your success.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Look into options regarding knowledge and picking up added skills. The more you do to enforce your abilities, the further ahead you'll get. Don't settle. Stimulate your mind.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Check out any little ailment that is bothering you. This is not the day to let anything go untouched. Follow through with your plans and do what's best to make your life more meaningful.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You may want to check in with someone you have concerns about. This person will not only be grateful, but will probably reward you in some way. The richness of your conversations today should result in some wonderful new ideas.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Don't be too trusting today. Insincerity from acquaintances can be expected, leading you in the wrong direction. Concentrate on your work rather than your personal life.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Discard the projects that you know won't fly and focus diligently on completing the ones you feel have promise. It's time to let your ambition grow.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You'll have to be objective when dealing with others if you don't want things to get blown out of proportion. Tension will flare up if you continue to criticize others. Back off and worry about yourself.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You can gain a great deal if you listen to others today. Your observations will lead to some uncanny insight. You will feel extremely fortunate if you look outside your own perimeters.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Get out with friends for an evening of entertainment. You will find that the thought of making a residential change will spark your interest.

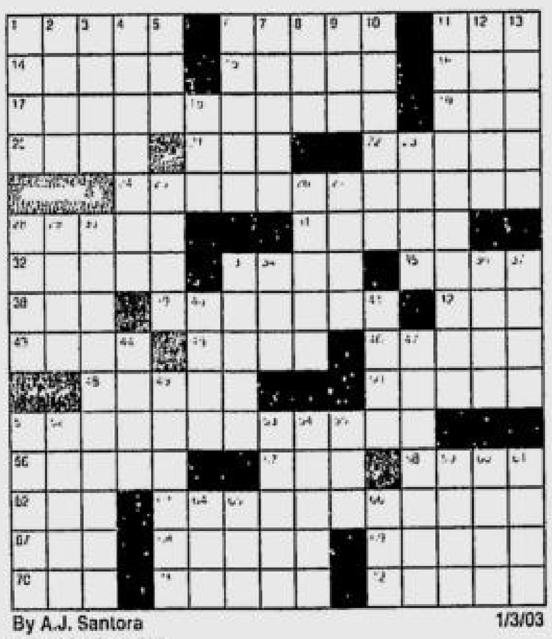
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): There will be lots of action in your life today. Stay on top of matters or you may find yourself on the defensive. Compromise will be the order of the day.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Don't believe everything you hear today. Someone around you is likely to try to take advantage of you. Don't let anyone talk you into doing things that go against your better judgment.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Relax and enjoy yourself. What doesn't get done today will get done tomorrow. You will feel settled and ready, once you've taken a bit of a break.

Birthday Baby: You will be intent on accomplishment and being the best. You will be a doer who will stop at nothing less than attaining your goals. You will be strong, powerful and persuasive.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By A.J. Santora
North Grafton, MA
1/3/03

ACROSS
1 White poplar
6 Excuse
11 Cranberry patch
14 Kitchen gadget
15 Ryan of no-hitters
16 Ms. Landers
17 Chaparral birds
19 J. Davis' domain
20 Caesar's penultimate words
21 Be penitent
22 Confiscates
24 Easy way
28 Mirabile __ (strange to say)
31 Force back
32 Butter subs
33 Hollow cylinder
35 Metal waste
38 $5 bill
39 Something to come down?
42 New Haven student
43 Greek cheese
45 Right on maps
46 City official
48 Burning coal
50 Picture in picture
51 Course at the college of hard knocks?
56 Beat rhythmically
57 2 on the phone
58 Electoral district
62 Author Levin
63 Saks candy bar?
67 Swindle
68 Poetic Muse
69 Wipe from memory
70 Meadow mama
71 Discourage
72 Chemical compound

DOWN
1 Lot of land
2 Word with camp or out
3 QED part
4 Began with preliminary remarks
5 Go wrong
6 Per __ (yearly)
7 Recluse
8 __-de-France
9 Saloon
10 Foot part
11 Feline milieu
12 Opening
13 Grind (teeth)
18 Tell's canton
23 Monkey's uncles?
25 Oxidize
26 Path of Discovery
27 Try to find
28 Tip, as one's hat
29 Nastase of tennis
30 Middle course
33 Crocodile __
34 Boom periods
36 Lotion additive
37 Encircle
40 Deep __ (wetsuit brand)
41 Give off
44 Iowa State city
47 Solutions
49 Complained
51 Flavor enhancer
52 "The Burden of Proof" author
53 Dull surface
54 Detest
55 Sony rival
59 Med. sch. subj.
60 Artifice
61 Forest ruminant
64 Wrath
65 Blubber
66 Churchill's gesture

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

B	I	F	F	■	C	A	P	T	■	A	F	I	R	E
A	L	O	T	■	A	L	F	A	■	U	L	N	A	R
B	L	A	C	K	J	A	C	K	■	S	O	R	T	S
Y	S	I	■	N	O	M	■	E	N	T	W	I	S	T
■	■	■	F	E	L	O	N	■	E	E	L	■	■	■
C	O	U	L	E	E	■	O	P	E	N	R	O	A	D
A	N	N	E	S	■	S	T	U	D	■	P	A	L	E
N	I	C	E	■	L	A	R	R	Y	■	O	K	I	E
D	O	L	T	■	A	G	A	R	■	S	W	E	A	R
O	N	E	S	I	D	E	D	■	F	L	E	N	S	E
■	■	■	T	S	E	■	E	R	R	O	R	■	■	■
C	O	R	R	O	D	E	■	F	A	P	■	B	U	D
O	R	I	E	L	■	S	P	A	C	E	R	A	C	E
M	A	T	E	D	■	N	A	D	A	■	I	S	L	E
P	L	A	T	E	■	E	X	E	S	■	G	E	A	R

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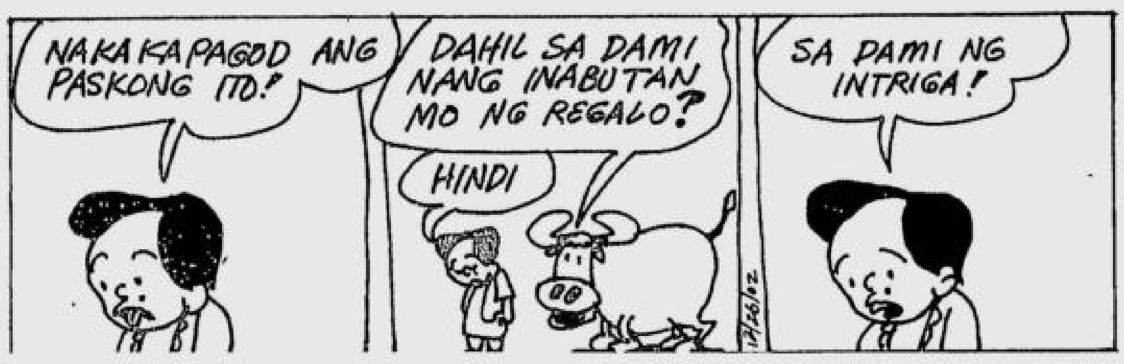
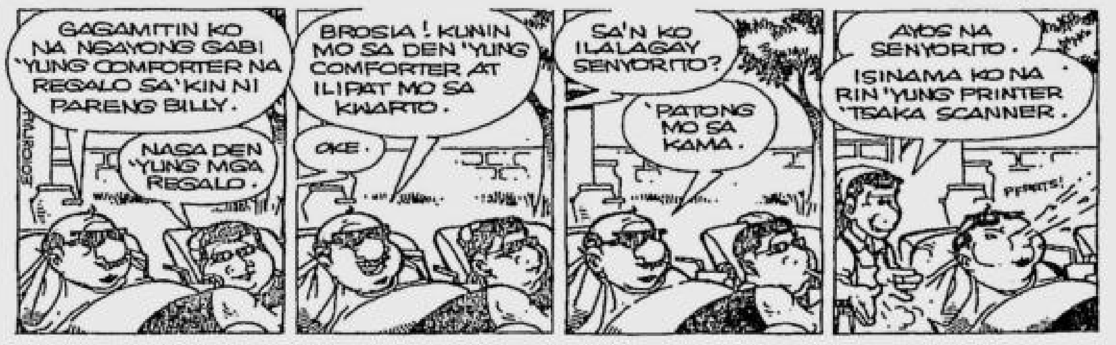
1/3/03

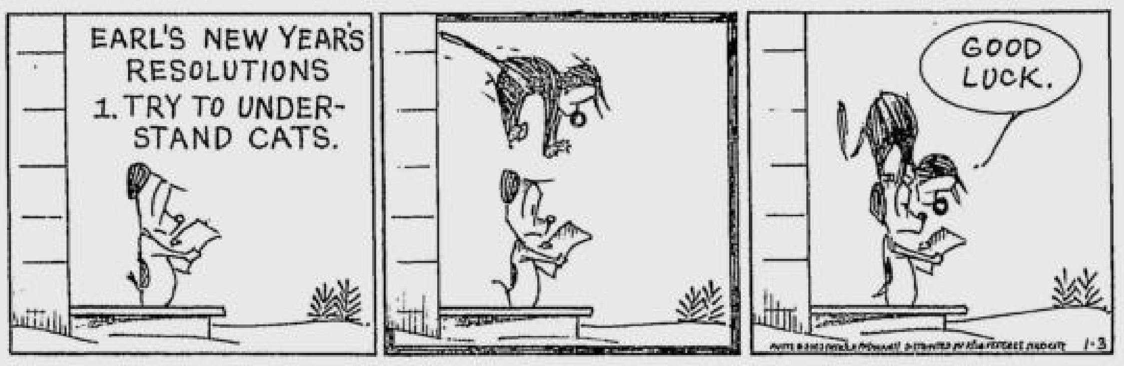
A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA


NAKAKAPAGOD ANG PASKONG ITO!
DAHIL SA DAMI NANG INABUTAN MO NG REGALO?
HINDI
SA DAMI NG INTRIGA!
12/26/02

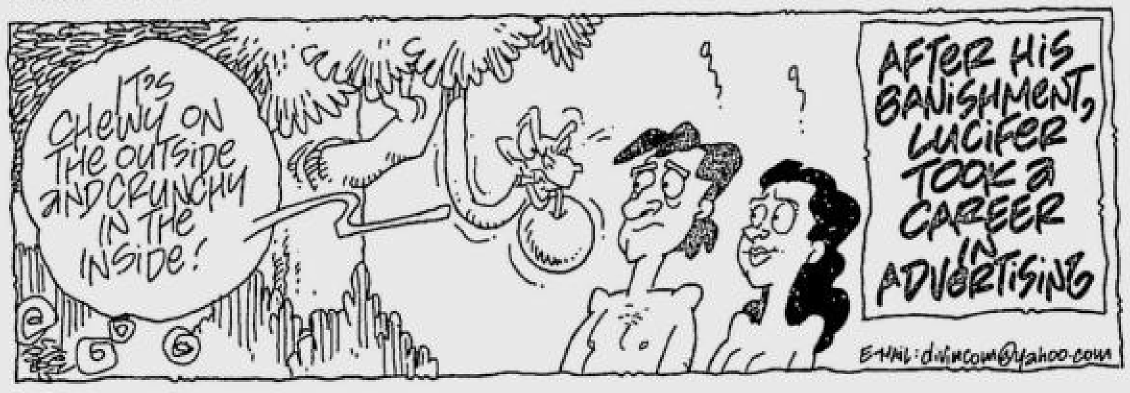
PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR


GAGAMITIN KO NA NGAYONG GABI 'YUNG COMFORTER NA REGALO SA'KIN NI PARENG BILLY.
NASA DEN 'YUNG MGA REGALO.
BROSIA! KUNIN MO SA DEN 'YUNG COMFORTER AT ILIPAT MO SA KWARTO.
OKE.
SA'N KO ILALAGAY SENYORITO?
'PATONG MO SA KAMA.
AYOS NA SENYORITO.
ISINAMA KO NA RIN 'YUNG PRINTER 'TSAKA SCANNER.
PFFRTS!

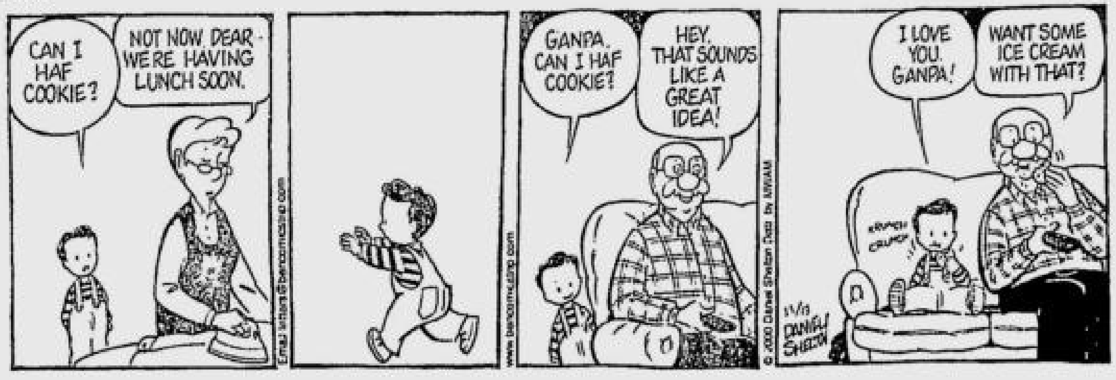
MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
1. TRY TO UNDERSTAND CATS.
GOOD LUCK.
1-3

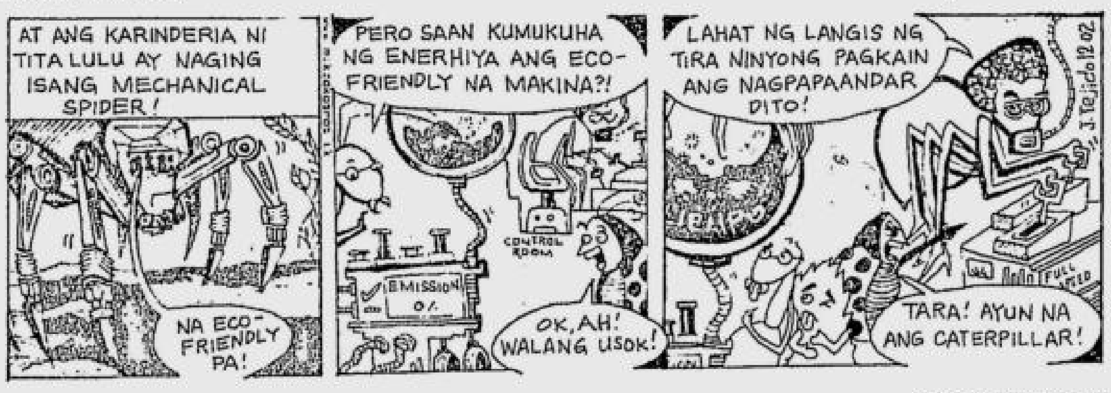
DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


IT'S CHEWY ON THE OUTSIDE AND CRUNCHY IN THE INSIDE!
AFTER HIS BANISHMENT, LUCIFER TOOK A CAREER IN ADVERTISING
E-MAIL: divincom@yahoo.com

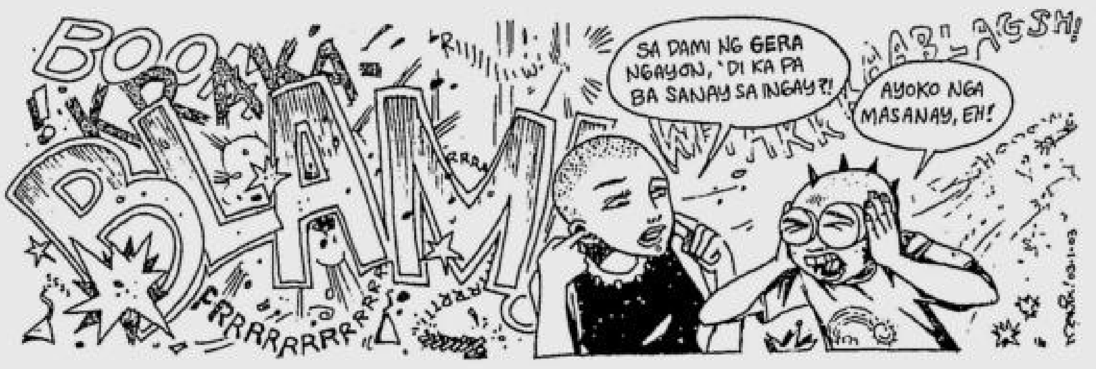
BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON


CAN I HAF COOKIE?
NOT NOW, DEAR. WE'RE HAVING LUNCH SOON.
GANPA, CAN I HAF COOKIE?
HEY, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT IDEA!
I LOVE YOU, GANPA!
WANT SOME ICE CREAM WITH THAT?
CRUNCH CRUNCH

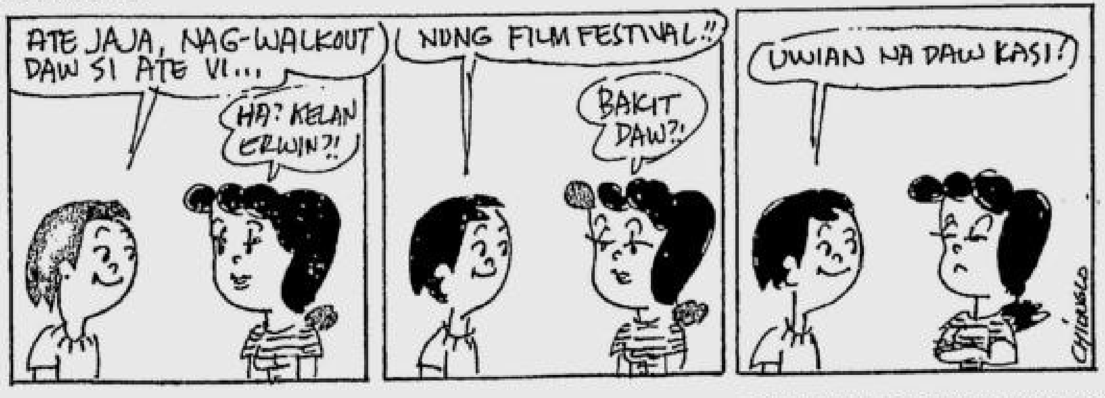
MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


AT ANG KARINDERIA NI TITA LULU AY NAGING ISANG MECHANICAL SPIDER!
NA ECO-FRIENDLY PA!
PERO SAAN KUMUKUHA NG ENERHIYA ANG ECO-FRIENDLY NA MAKINA?!
CONTROL ROOM
EMISSION 0%
OK, AH! WALANG USOK!
LAHAT NG LANGIS NG TIRA NINYONG PAGKAIN ANG NAGPAPAANDAR DITO!
FULL SPEED
TARA! AYUN NA ANG CATERPILLAR!
J. Tejido 12.02

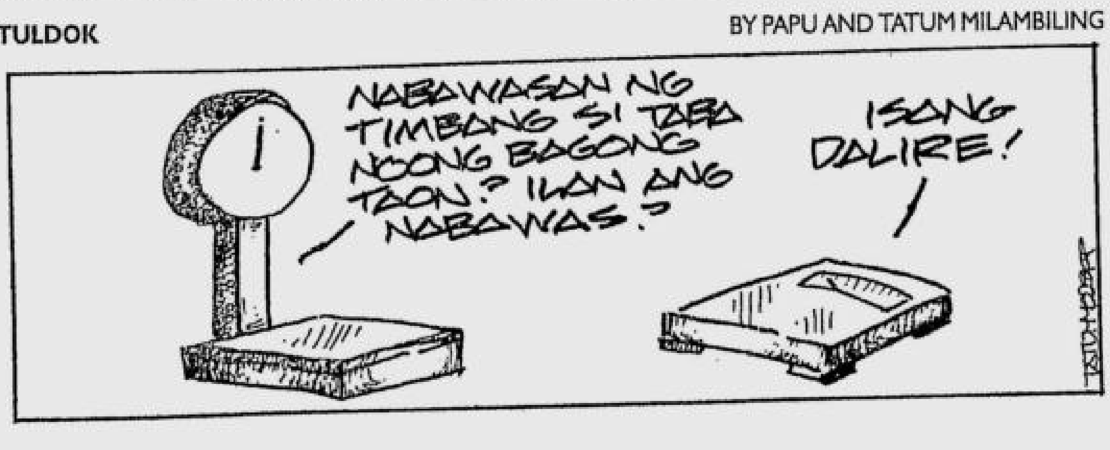
KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA


BOOM! KA-BLAM!
FRRRRRRRRR
SA DAMI NG GERA NGAYON, 'DI KA PA BA SANAY SA INGAY?!
KAB-LAGSH!
AYOKO NGA MASANAY, EH!

LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

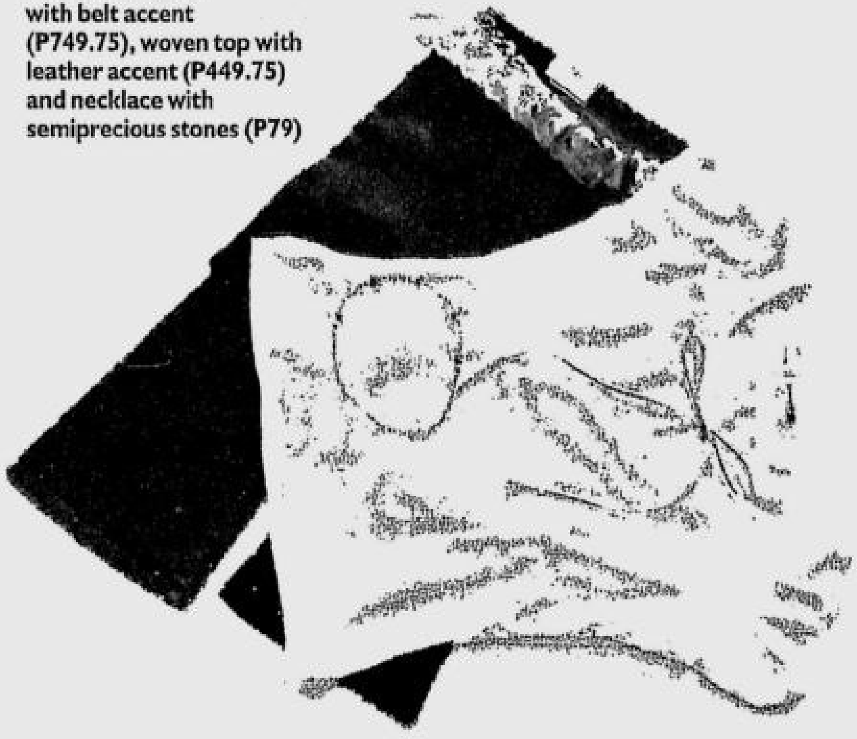

ATE JAJA, NAG-WALKOUT DAW SI ATE VI...
HA? KELAN ERWIN?!
NUNG FILM FESTIVAL!!
BAKIT DAW?!
UWIAN NA DAW KASI!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


NABAWASAN NG TIMBANG SI TABA NOONG BAGONG TAON? ILAN ANG NABAWAS?
ISANG DALIRE!

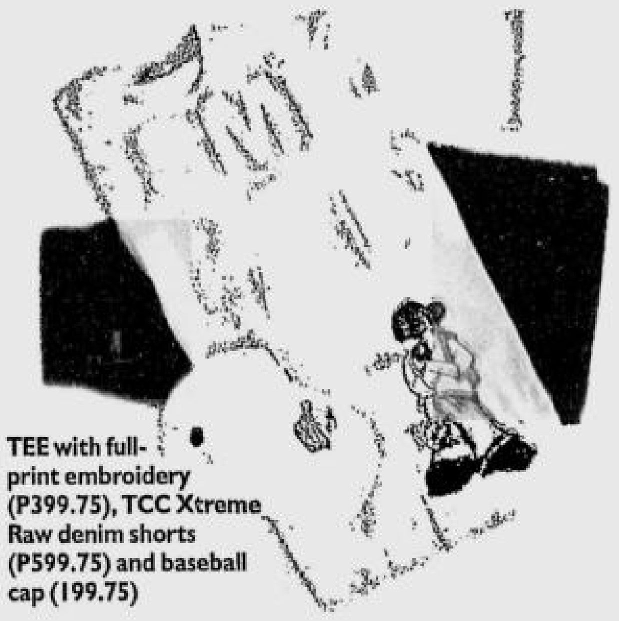
EMBROIDERED shirt (P699.75), tee with appliqué (P399.75), Xtreme canvas jeans (P799.75)

BOOT-CUT cord jeans (P599.75), cord jacket (P649.75), vintage print tee (P209.75) and wooden bead necklace (P79)

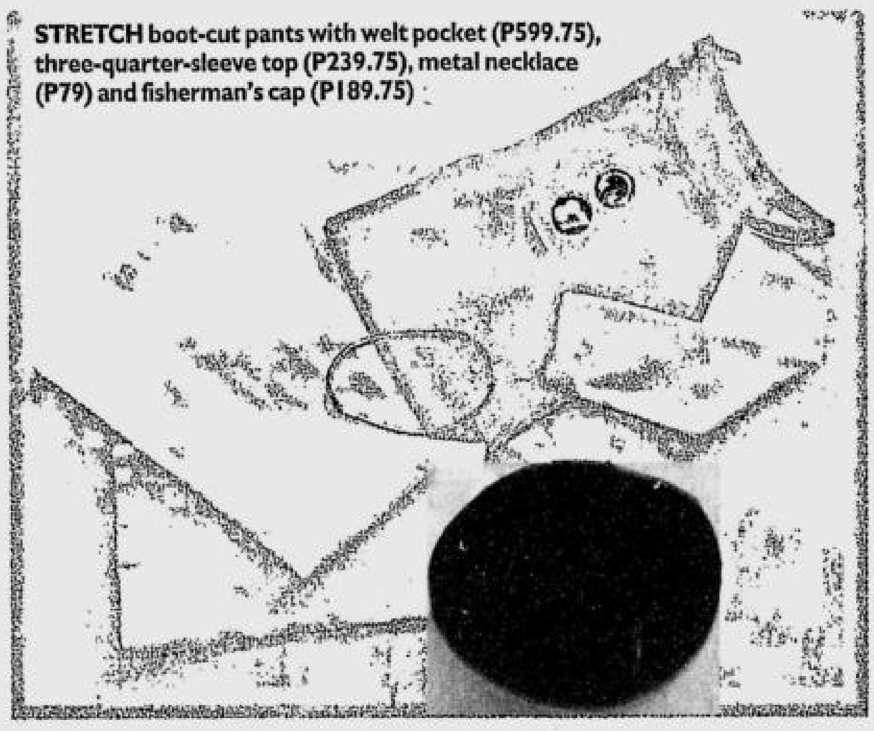


BOOT-CUT jeans with belt accent (P749.75), woven top with leather accent (P449.75) and necklace with semiprecious stones (P79)

SEMI-FLARE jeans (P649.75), red fleece collegiate jacket (P499.75) and navy tee (P209.75)



TEE with full-print embroidery (P399.75), TCC Xtreme Raw denim shorts (P599.75) and baseball cap (199.75)



STRETCH boot-cut pants with welt pocket (P599.75), three-quarter-sleeve top (P239.75), metal necklace (P79) and fisherman's cap (P189.75)

HOODED sports jacket with reflectorized taping (P899.75), crewneck shirt (P399.75) and basic five-pocket jeans (P599.75)

b.'s bright, brave and bold moves

From page C4

basic print tees will please the young, urban male who longs for comfort and edge in everyday wear. Bobson's D2 Deconstructed Denims has different washes and rinses to provide options for the most essential piece in a man's wardrobe. Alternatives are pants in comfy fabrics such as canvas, twill and cotton nylon.

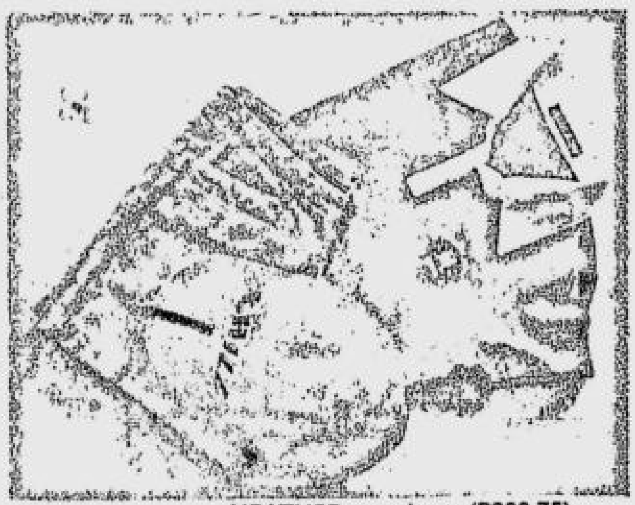
The Cosmic Clan collection dazzles with roomy, brightly designed pieces for the ultimate in hip-hop flava. Oversized and with bold prints, patches and embroidery, all the fly guy needs are the moves and the requisite attitude.

RAGLAN woven shirt (P649.75) and low-rise jeans (P649.75)

HOODED sports jacket (P899.75), V-neck shirt (P399.75) and D2 jeans (P699.75)

SANDBLASTED denim miniskirt (P399.75) and sleeveless hooded tee with appliqué (P369.75)

BASIC cord jacket (P749.75), crewneck shirt (P399.75) and straight-cut denim jeans (P599.75)



HEATHER gray shorts (P299.75), white collared tee (P239.75) and red twill baseball cap (P189.75)

BOBSON FASHION IS AVAILABLE AT BOBSON FREESTANDING BOUTIQUES AND OUTLETS AT LEADING DEPARTMENT STORES NATIONWIDE.

LOW-RISE capri pants (P599.75), printed tee (P209.75) zip-up jacket (P499.75) and yellow cap (P189.75)

PIGMENT-DYED cotton shirt (P699.75), sweatshirt (P449.75) and sandblasted five-pocket jeans (P699.75)

CREWNECK tee with back-to-back print (P399.75), Xtreme jeans with back pocket embroidery (P799.75) and TCC bonnet (P199.75)

b.'s bright, brave and bold moves

DENIM jacket (P699.75) crewneck tee (P399.75), Xtreme Raw jeans (P799.75) and bonnet (P189.75)

Text by Cheche V. Moral
Photos by Chito Vecina

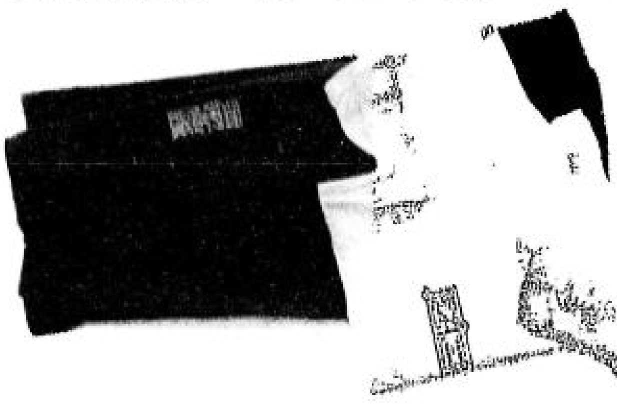
WATCH out! A not-so-new name in street apparel emerges from relative obscurity and is out to make its presence felt—strongly—in the exciting and competitive world of fashion retail.

With its beefed-up image, Bobson defines urban hip and ease in casual dressing with its new collection of clothing and accessories. A varied mix of basics to cool, trendy pieces, the Bobson collection is a toast to individual style. Bobson is one more proof that local RTW can and does offer affordable chic.

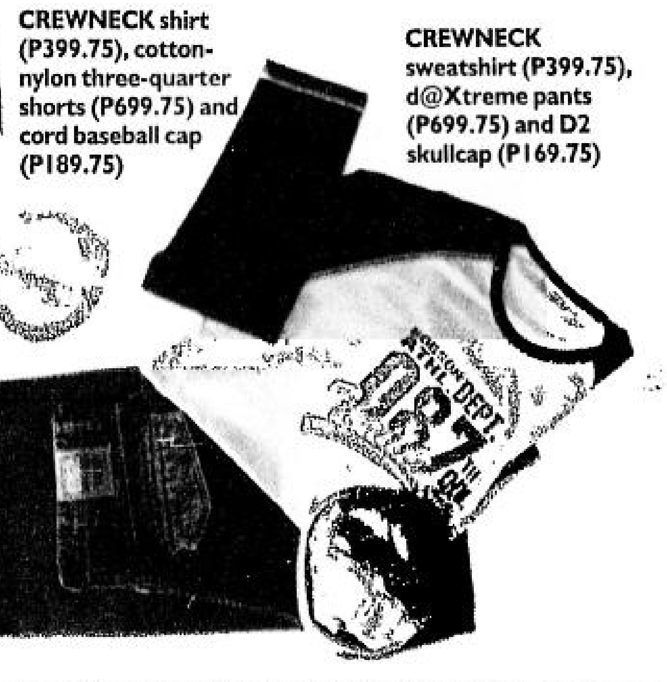
Its "b." women's line caters to the sporty down to the femininely preppy. The pieces range from the basic round tees to those with collars and long-sleeves, to cotton tops with leather ribbon accents, to the classic monogrammed varsity sweaters and sleeveless tops with hood. Colors range from subdued and bright solids to inspired patterns and details. So-now low-rises and boot-cuts and the timeless capris, miniskirts and shorts comprise the denim line for her. Neckpieces, belts and crusher hats and caps complete the "b." collection.

Button-down and zip-up collared shirts,

B.'S/ C3



CREWNECK shirt (P399.75), cotton-nylon three-quarter shorts (P699.75) and cord baseball cap (P189.75)



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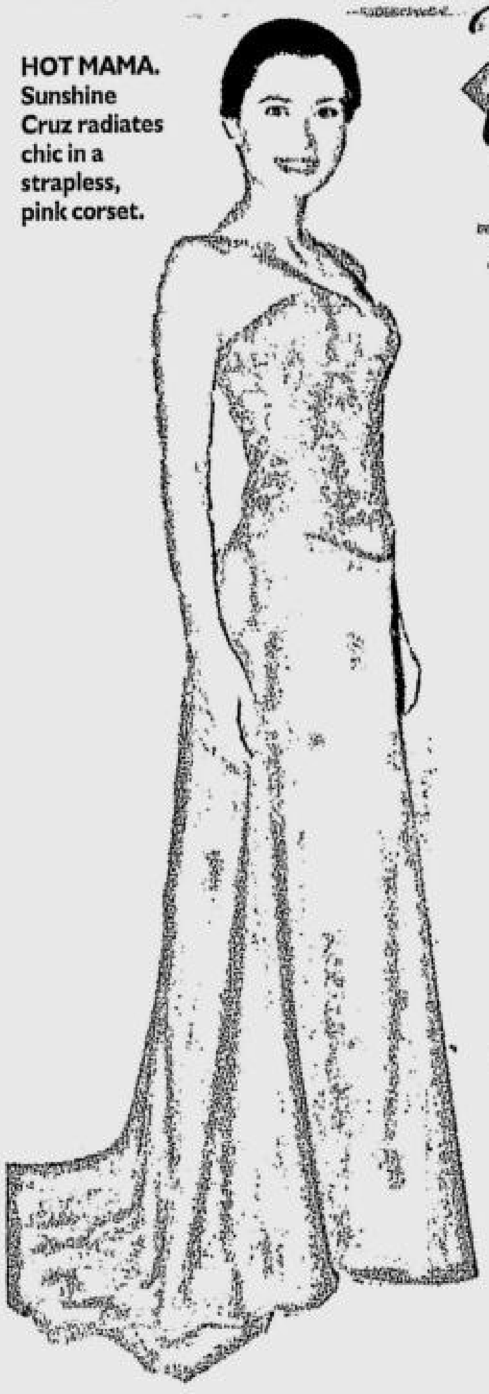


HOT MAMA. Sunshine Cruz radiates chic in a strapless, pink corset.

The night of the walkout, good fashion sense walked in

Thank heavens style credits outnumbered the style debits at the recent filmfest awards

LADY IN RED. Lani Mercado opts for an asymmetric dress with matching wrap.

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina

PEOPLE are probably still wondering how in the world Ara Mina managed to edge out a more seasoned Vilma Santos for Best Actress in the Metro Manila Film Festival, but from where we stood it was clear as day who the big loser was in the fashion department.

In keeping with "Mano Po's" Chinese theme, Ara slipped into a cheongsam but it was a stylized one no decent family would allow their daughter to be caught dead in—unless the family is grooming her for a career in the boudoir, and that's putting it mildly.

Ara hid her arms with a long pair of gloves, but had no qualms about baring her bras and what they held underneath a see-through blouse. And as if the top's behind-the-scene extension wasn't enough, the skirt also had a flowing train. If anything, the lacy black number by Maxi Cinco was as muddled and as convoluted as the bold star's controversial movie.

Vision in beige

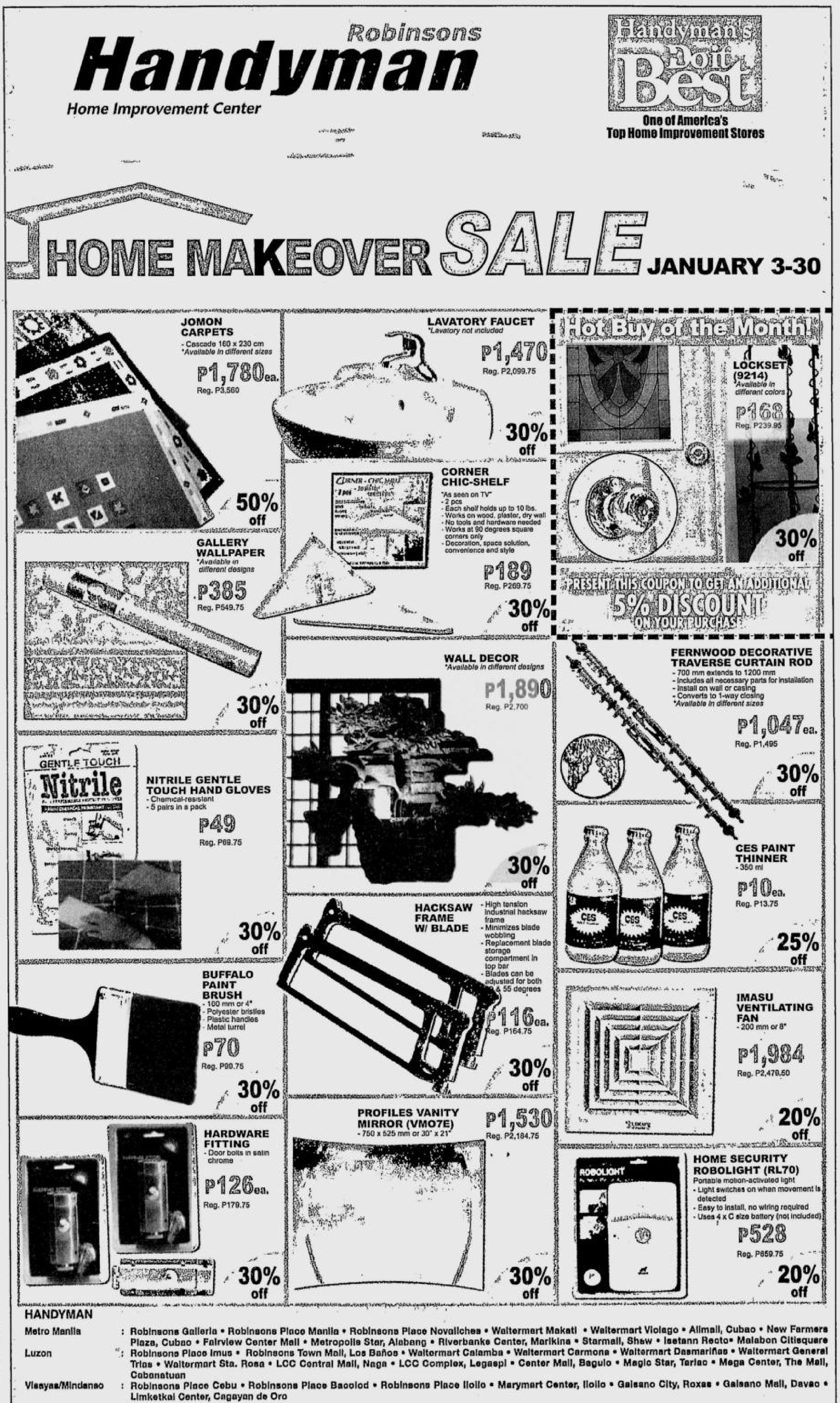
Ara aside, thank heavens the fashion credits far outweighed the fashion debits.

Lucy Torres was a vision in beige in Joe Salazar's spaghetti-strapped gown, which was beaded on the bodice and accented with plumose details, a la "Moulin Rouge," above the knee. Indeed, a lesser mortal wouldn't have gotten away with such a flamboyant outfit. But there is a God. Richard Gomez's better half fell short of perfection because of her long Morticia-like tresses.

Rufa Mae Quinto and Joyce Jimenez glided in wearing near-identical coral gowns that each enhanced with their own brand of sex appeal. Rufa Mae wore an Eric Pineda creation that draped her well-endowed chest and hourglass figure. Joyce chose a Bob Mackie vintage strapless version that flattered her dusky complexion.

THE NIGHT/ D2

CHARMED. Former child star Andrea Bautista, producer of top-grossing film "Agimat," is tastefully stylish in a black column by Paul Cabral



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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5104 Series of 2002

The night of the walkout, good fashion sense walked in

From page D1

Sunshine Cruz opened the show with a bang in Pineda's strapless corset in eye-catching hot pink. Despite marriage and motherhood, the sexy star has managed to maintain her looks and figure.

Take two

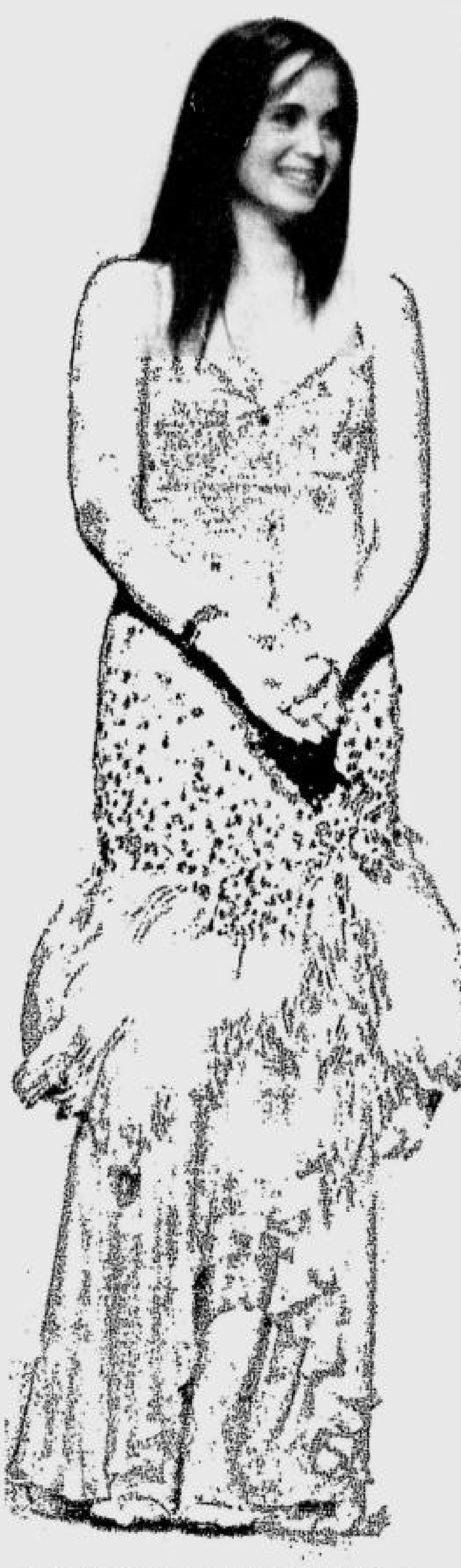
Although she wasn't in the running for Best Actress, Lorna Tolentino looked like a winner in Paul Cabral's strapless black and white gown. She looked slimmer and younger in the empire number that was draped and accented with a brooch below the chest.

Pops Fernandez went romantic in Randy Ortiz's draped and backless yellow halter. Alas, the gown was a replica of the lime green piece the designer did for Gelli de Belen earlier this year. We didn't know Ortiz is already into RTW. The Concert Queen should demand a refund for being made to wear a "repeat performance" although she did look great in it.

Speaking of performance, a mature performer either ages gracefully or is forever caught in a time warp and becomes a caricature of herself through the clothes she wears. Guess where Helen Gamboa, in an off-shoulder canary yellow gown, and Pilita Corrales, in an ill-fitting black number, fall under.

As for Ara, not even an acting award could make up for the atrocious gown she wore that one disenchanting evening.

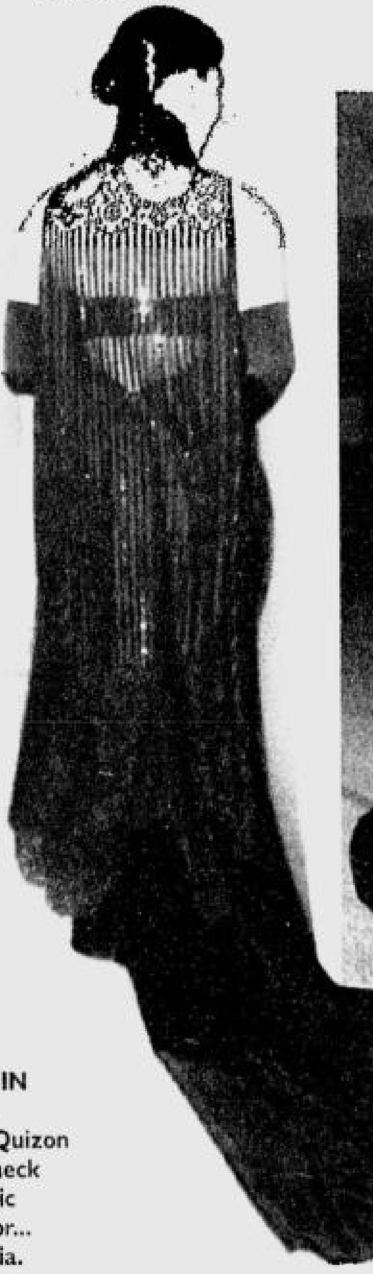
E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph



SATINE SUPERB. Lucy Torres carries Joe Salazar's plumose creation with aplomb

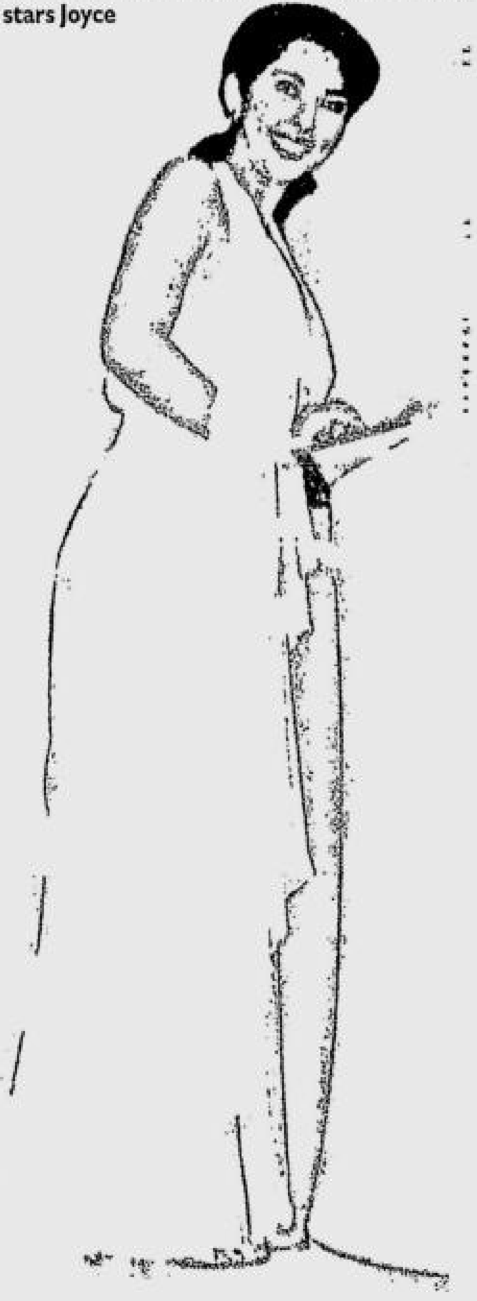
BEAUTIES IN PINK. The evening's preferred shade looks stunning on sexy stars Joyce Jimenez and Rufa Mae Quinto, and young star Jolina Magdangal.

AUTUMN IN MANILA. Vandolph Quizon in a turtleneck and metallic jacket fit for... well, Siberia.



DIYOS KO PO! Ara Mina in Maxi Cinco's boudoir basics overdone with train and long gloves.

CALL THEM BABES. Lorna Tolentino, with husband Rudy Fernandez, slips into a tried-and-tested silhouette with wonderful results.



ROMANTIC MODE. Pops Fernandez looks willowy in a yellow backless halter with a flowing train.

Products suited for one's needs and budget

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

The market now allows you to have what you want at prices you can afford

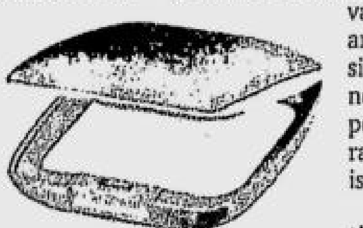
DO we really get what we pay for? Sometimes!

Here are products having the same purpose but different prices to fit everyone's budget. My close friends, who are in no way connected with the companies involved, and I have "road-tested" all products listed here:

Goal: Find a foundation that adjusts to any lighting and is great for combination skin.

Expensive: Clarins Hydra Balance Powder Foundation (six shades)—great for most skin types except the very dry and those that require very heavy coverage due to scarring. Contains reversible sponge for foundation and pressed powder touch-ups during the day. Comes in a matte deep red and gold compact (P495) that is scratch- and fingerprint-proof, with the texture of velvet, and protected by a red velvet pouch.

It also gives a light texture and matte finish. Skin shows through but imperfections are camouflaged. Light is reflected as on bare skin. The complexion remains matte and luminous throughout the day. Color stays true for hours in any type of lighting, even in bright light which tends to make foundation appear dull or faded. Fine lines and imperfections appear less noticeable. The product has the prettiest packaging and gives value for time and money, since you won't need to buy powder separately. The refill is P1,250.



CLARINS Hydra Balance

Prescriptives: Traceless with SPF 8 (P1,800). Although they didn't make any claims, road tests show the product hydrates dry patches from acne medication and controls oil on the T-zone. The product is liquid but the finish is as smooth as talc-free powder. It comes in a tube. No lines marking the area where the product is applied show. People commented on my "great bare skin" both in daylight and under fluorescent lighting. Even pictures and videos show my skin to be clean and smooth.

On oilier areas, patting loose powder with puff will keep the shine at bay longer. The six shades available cover a lot of skin tones and leave no demarcation lines. Visit their counter at Rustan's Makati and let Carol or Ysa help you choose the shade suitable for you.

Great save: Avon Auto Focus Foundation with SPF 15 (P550). This lives up to its promise, evening out combination skin and keeping it flawless-looking all day and night in any lighting. My skin looked like velvet. The downside? The packaging is not so great and there are only three shades: Ivory Beige for fair to light skin, Nude for light to medium skin, and Almond for medium to dark skin. The Nude is most compatible with most Asian undertones and skin color as it is in neutral yellow. The Ivory Beige is too pink and flattering only to *mestizas* with pink undertones.

To check undertones, compare insides of wrists to white bond paper. If you're very light but yellow-toned, you may adjust the tone of the ivory beige by covering it with pale yellow loose powder (LP). Suggestions: Watercolors "Light" LP (P780); T. Le Clerc Banane LP small (P1,150) or large (P1,900); Bobbi Brown "Pale Yellow" LP.

SHISEIDO sheer lipstick in S4

If you are too dark for Almond, correct by using darker loose powder. Check out Watercolors tel. no. 410-1219 (Val de la Fuente custom blends for P880). Clinique and Prescriptives have shades available and the latter also custom blends, or Bobbi Brown's "Basic Brown" LP.

Goal: Find an alternative to Clinique's Almost lipstick in "Black Honey," which is only available in the United States. Stars such as Elle McPherson and Calista Flockhart have this seemingly black-looking stick that becomes sheer berry/plum stain when applied to their favorite shades. It goes with any color outfit and skin tone, and hydrates lips.

Expensive: Shiseido sheer lipstick in S4 (Honey Tea, P895). Closest in color to Black Honey, it looks like lipstick but finishes like gloss and has the most staying power. Packaging: Gunmetal cylinder.

MAC Sheer Plum lipstick (P780) is slightly more reddish brown than Shiseido and stays as long as Clinique. Packaging: matte black bullet.

Great savings: in2it Cute lipsticks (P199). This is a sheer formula that is more opaque than the other two and the Clinique Black Honey. Two shades come close to Clinique: depending on your body chemistry, Gala is the lighter shade and Allure the darker one. If you are acidic (lipsticks tend to turn orange after a while), pick Allure; if not, pick Gala as Allure may become too muddy-looking. The two are about half a shade to a full shade apart. Packaging: icy white rounded tube. in2it cosmetics are available in PCX Cinderella and Landmark.

AVON Autofocus Foundation in Ivory, Nude and Almond

Fusion of sun, soil and style

LUSH green pastures nestled amidst wind-rustled coconut palms, cool, airy rest-house with a view and rows of vegetable patches.

This is what the people behind La Finca Country Resort had in mind when they set up the 20-hectare area amidst the plantation fields of Lipa City, Batangas.

La Finca means "The Farm" in Spanish, and the entire concept combines the features of a fully-managed farm estate and a vacation resort. In keeping with a farm estate environment, each house covers only 25 percent of every 1,000-sq m lot. The rest of the lot will be for the homeowner's use as a bed of bright blooms, vegetable orchard or aqua gardens.

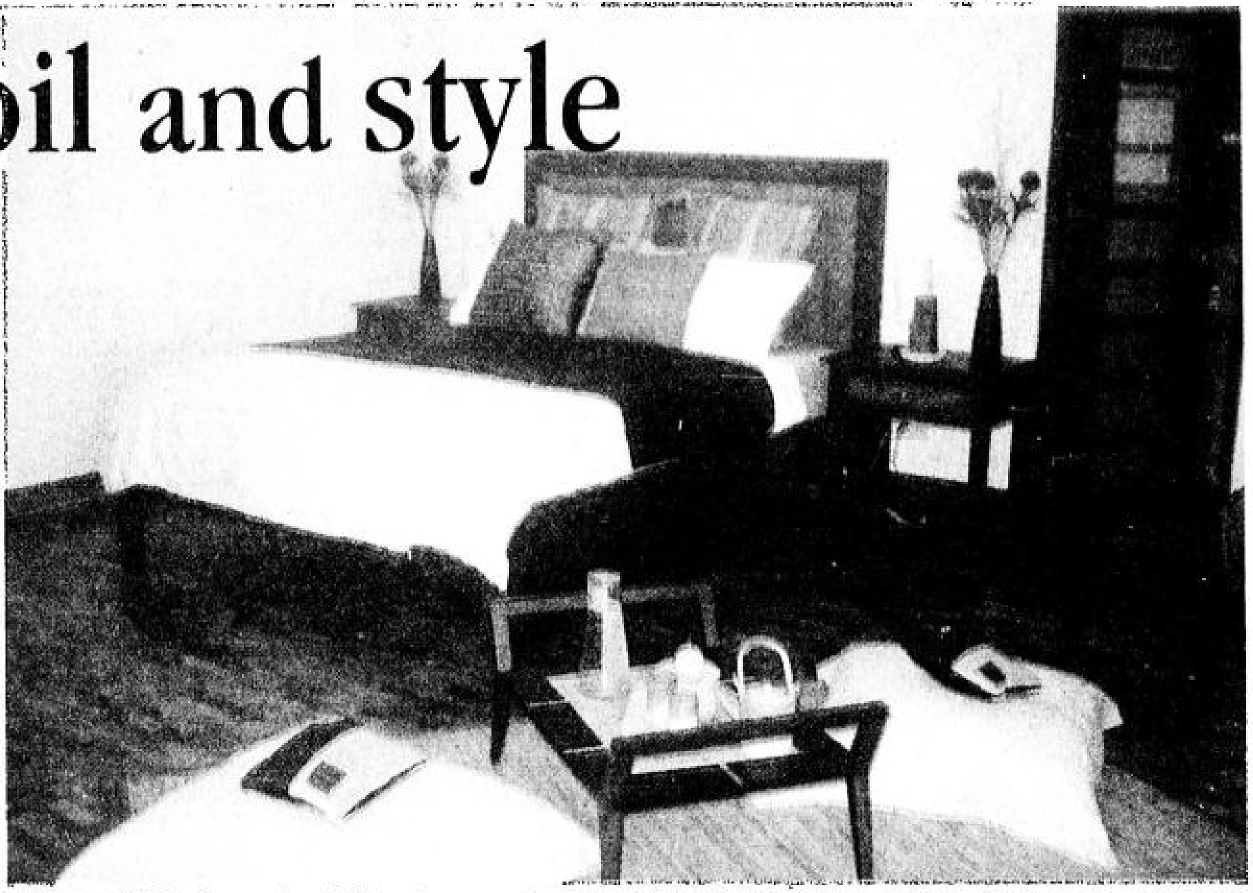
Mountain view

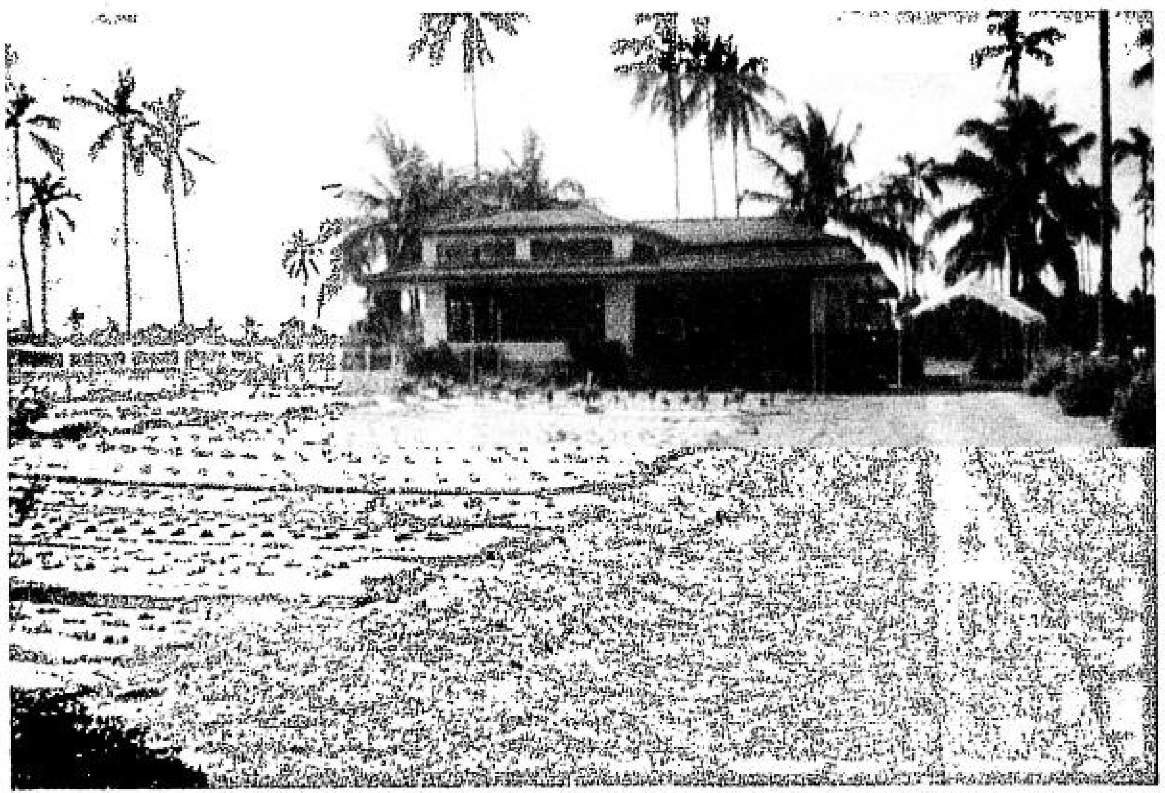
Located approximately 90 minutes away from Manila via the Calamba exit of South Luzon Expressway and Lipa exit of the Star Tollway, the resort is just a few minutes away from Lipa City proper along San Pablo Road, with views of Mount Malarayat and adjacent to Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club.

Apart from the Asian-inspired weekend homes with cable, Internet and telephone-ready access, amenities include a Balinese-inspired country club—designed by Leandro V. Locsin & Partners—with spa and gym, swimming pool, function rooms, game rooms, tennis court, facilities for dining al fresco. Pocket parks, walkways, jogging paths, a fishing lagoon and picnic grounds are also being developed.

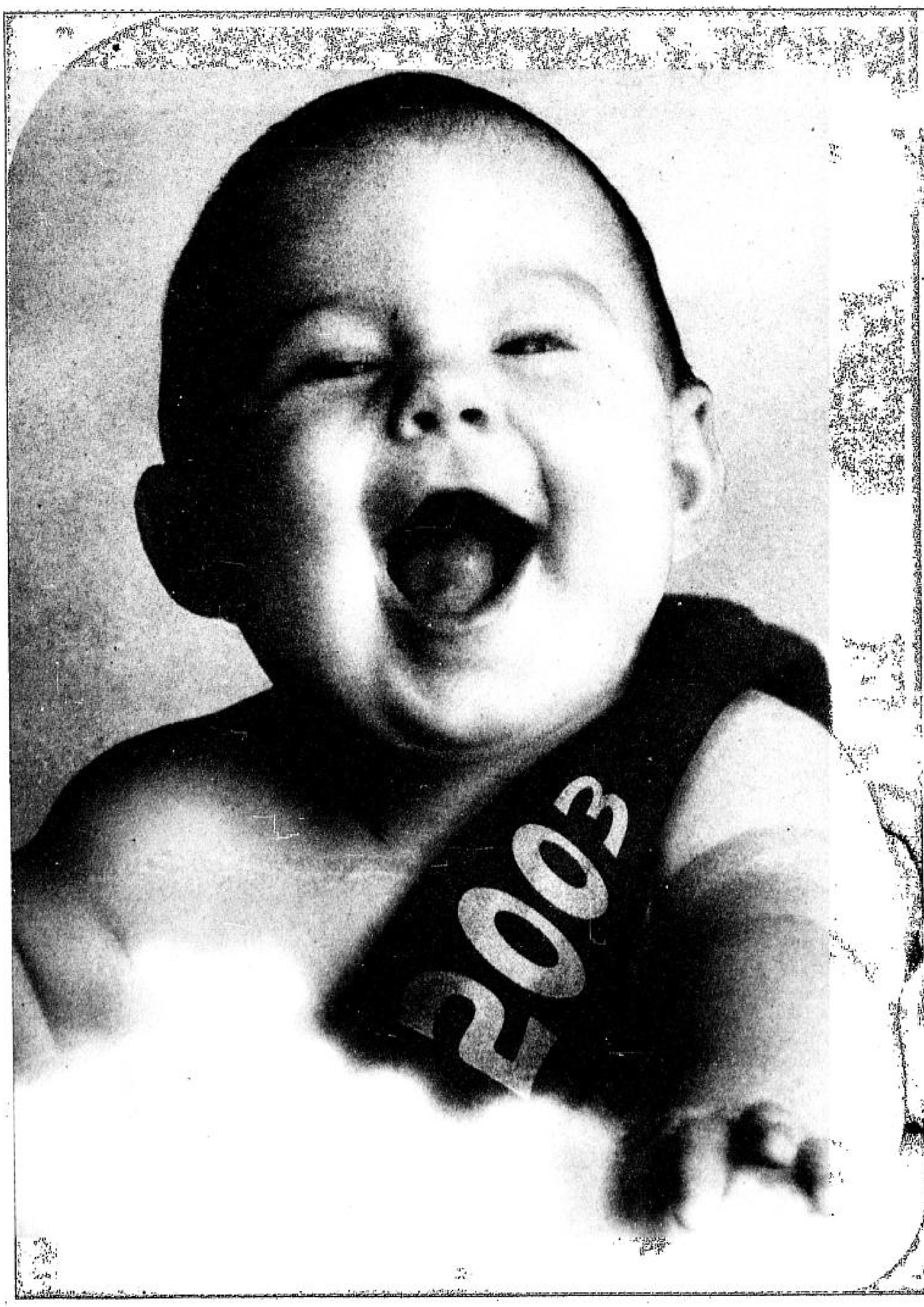
A real highlight is the Israeli-made greenhouse, which employs Netafim farming technology, irrigation equipment and drip systems.

La Finca is a venture of Mancon-CBDC and Rumali Land Corp. as land owner. A key player in the resort construction business, the group's previous projects in the country include the Tagaytay Highlands Golf and Country Club and the Caylabne Beach Resort.


THE MASTER bedroom of model farm house exudes style and simplicity.


MODEL home amid bucolic setting in a La Fincafarm estate with an average size of 1,000 sq m. that leaves plenty of room for a vegetable orchard or a garden of blooms.

THE DINING room maximizes natural light with the use of wide glass windows.



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What's Cocap and why is it doing these things?

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

SUDDENLY, the Concerned Citizens against Pollution (Cocap) is in the spotlight. Ever since it was organized in 1993, its leaders wanted to crusade for clean air—without too much fanfare.

Its main aim was to get the citizens to fight air pollution and create a healthier environment for everyone. Of course, such a cause couldn't but make noise, as much from advocates as from opponents. It's in the news more than ever these days not only because emission testing of vehicles has been deferred by the Department of Transportation and Communication and its agencies, an act being protested by Cocap and other NGOs, but also because new Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Elisea "Bebet" Gozun was Cocap's immediate past president.

Gozun's record as environmentalist is now well-known, since media picked up her biodata immediately after she was appointed by President Arroyo. A lot of people are now taking notice of the organization she once headed.

How did Cocap start? Who organized it and and why has it attracted environmentalists of Gozun's caliber? What has it accomplished?

I contacted the one person who could best tell me those things—Ester V. Perez de Tagle, Cocap founder and past president. The idea to form the environmental association, de Tagle said, came in 1993, when a World Health Organization (WHO) report declared Metro Manila one of the most polluted cities in the world.

An invitation

De Tagle wrote a situationer, which was circulated during the Edsa People Power anniversary celebration in February 1993. It also served as invitation to all concerned citizens to come to a meeting that same month to form a militant group to combat air pollution, which was not only giving the country a bad name, but also giving rise to a lot of respiratory ailments among the people. Members held protest marches, which were reported on television programs here and abroad. They also attended and participated in hearings and discussions on policy issues.

The group was soon recognized as concerned citizens on a crusade, giving rise to the name Concerned Citizens against Pollution. The acronym, Cocap, was coined by another dedicated environmentalist, Odette Alcantara.

Because most of the issues required extensive research and information on specific subjects, Cocap recruited experts for the highly technical tasks required. Among them is Jose B. Lugay, a retired San Miguel Corporation top executive who was president of the Philippine Institute of Chemical Engineers (Piche) and in the University of Santo Tomas Alumni Hall of Fame. Another Cocap member and Hall of Famer is Ramon Orlina, an international awardee for his work as a pioneer in glass sculpture.

Who's who

The membership list reads like a who's who of specialists and technologists—Buddy Lava, also past president of PICHE; and Frs. Daniel Macnamara, Victor Badillo and Jose R. Villarin, all of Ateneo's Manila Observatory, home of Asia's Center for Climate Change. There is Dr. Angeline Galang, director of Miriam-Peace, a pioneer in environmental education in the Philippines; as well as two pioneers in ecological waste management in the country, Luz Sabas and Dr. Metodio Palaypay.

Then there are the people who steered the organization through the years, de Tagle, who served from 1993-96; Dr. Doy Romero, a social scientist of note; Jun Ellis, an Ateneo graduate of Environmental Science; Oscar Escobar whose presidency was cut short when he died in 2001; and Bebet Gozun, who took over the rest of Escobar's term but resigned upon his appointment to the DENR.

Escobar became the first chair of the Partnership for Clean Air when that body was elected lead organization (quite a distinction) of the DENR-Asian Development Bank-sponsored Air Quality Improvement Sector Development Program. The designation was in recognition of Cocap's untiring efforts in the Lead-Free Coalition and the Coalition for Cleaner Fuel which, incidentally, were the precursors of the Partnership for Clean Air.

Setting the pace

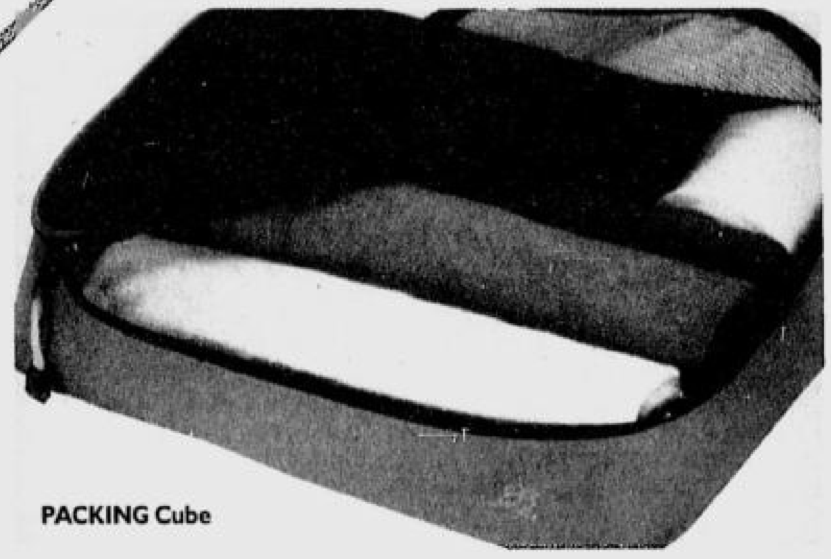
And then, of course, there is de Tagle herself who, from an outsider's perspective, seems to have set the pace for private sector clean air advocacy. She describes herself as essentially a nature lover and a cause-oriented person. The WHO report on Metro Manila's air pollution problem immediately moved her to action and she set the wheels rolling for the eventual set-up of Cocap. She currently serves as caretaker of the organization until new elections are held in January.

Through the years, Cocap has been in the forefront or in the middle of environmental crusades, mainly air pollution. But it has also involved itself in garbage problems and water pollution, which is not always publicized (publicity not being among members' priorities). In the campaign to ban incinerators, it participated in the necessary paper work, joining Greenpeace in attending deliberations that led to the eventual passage of the Clean Air Act and Ecological Waste Management Act, two vital laws that, says de Tagle, remain unimplemented.

Last October, before Gozun went to DENR, two alternative fuels—LPG/CNG—were presented by the Partnership for Clean Air. One is an LPG alternative, while the other is a coco-biodiesel blend.

We should be hearing more about them—and Cocap—in the days to come.

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com



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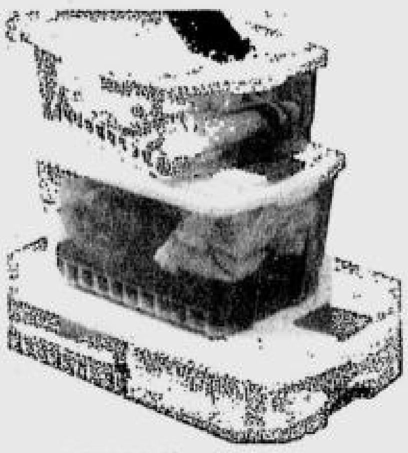


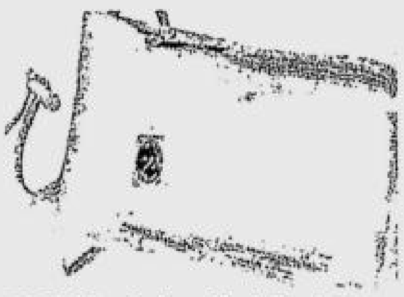
FRESHTOPS Clear Boxes

MAKEROOM, dubbed "the store for organized living" offers a complete array of products to answer storage requirements. Closet, bath and kitchen utilities for the home as well as office and travel accessories are all available at MakeRoom in the Power Plant mall in Rockwell in Makati City.

For weekend getaways, the Zip-Top Carry All has a large zipped main compartment that accommodates large bottles comfortably and leaves plenty of room for other travel essentials. When traveling with valuables, Neck Stash does the job. Made with DuPont Coolmax, it keeps valuables next to your skin. Coolmax is soft and breathable, you hardly know you're wearing it.

Aside from these ideal travel mates, MakeRoom has an entire slew of storage solution, such as packing cubes, which are designed for optimum organization and wrinkle-free pacing. FreshTops clear boxes provide easy access to items stored in the box.

ZIP-TOP Carry All



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